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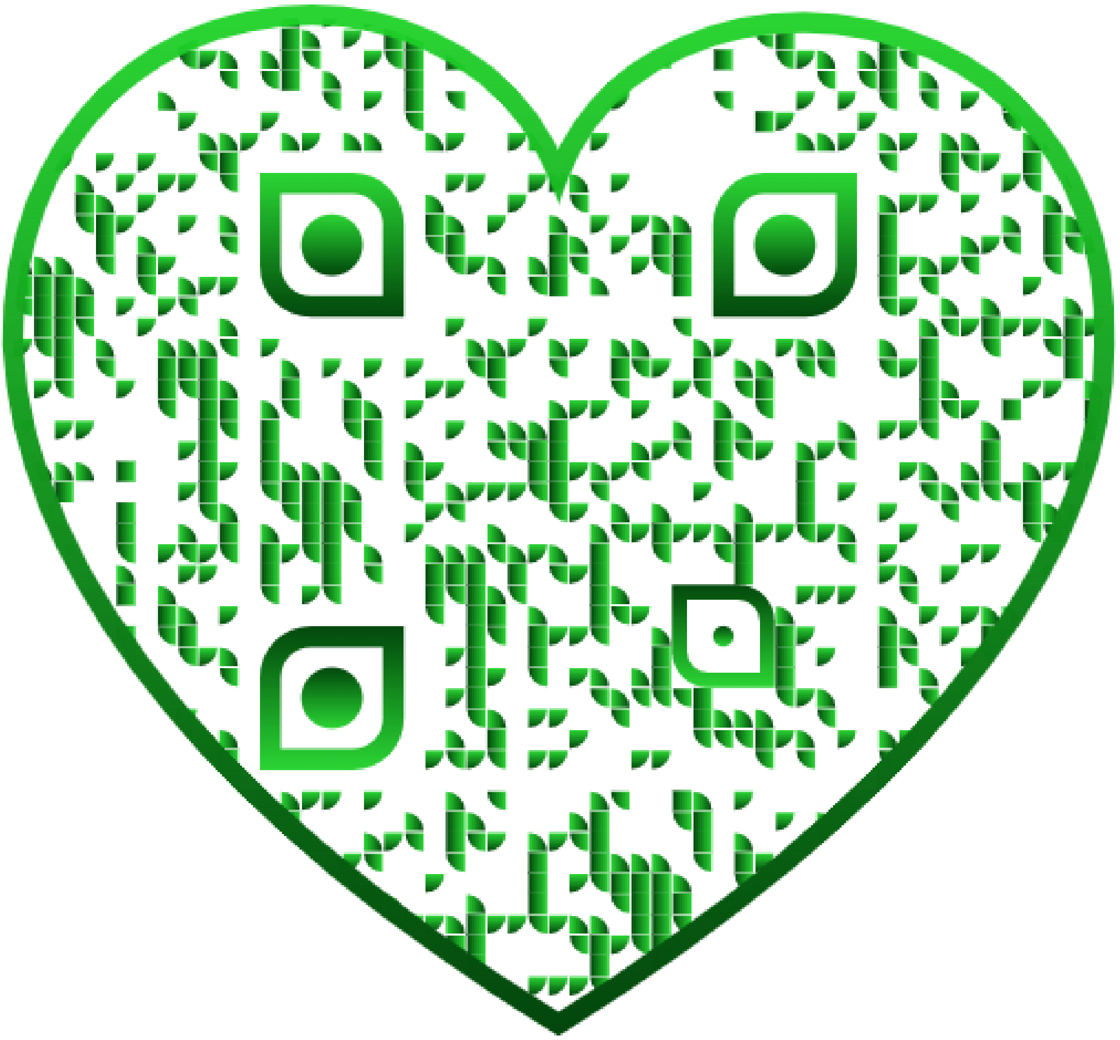

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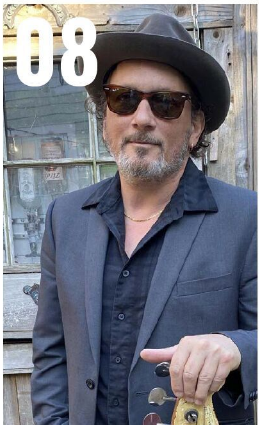

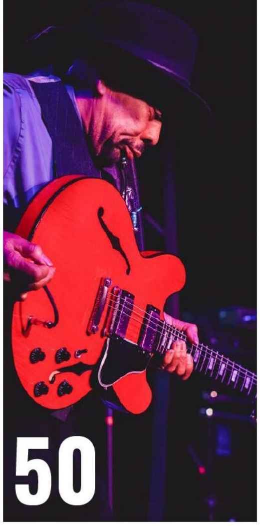

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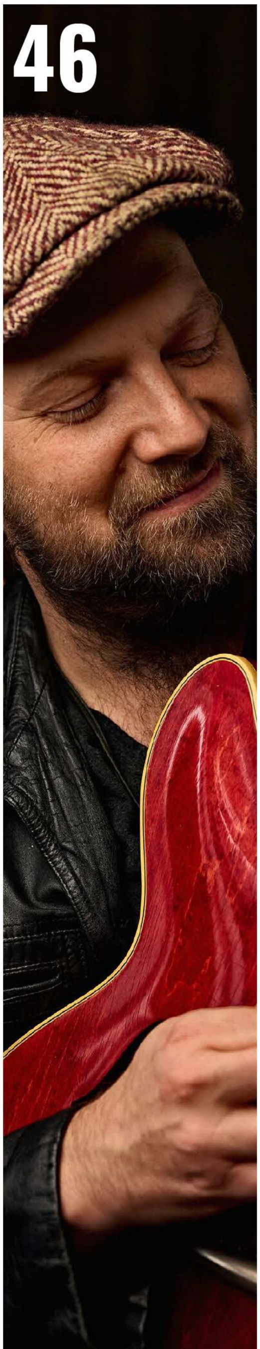

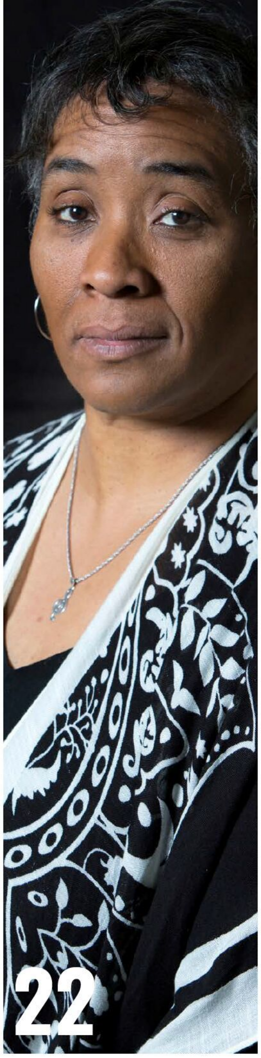

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RICK ESTRIN & THE NIGHTCATS

I was fortunate to have a featured exhibition in Hungary at The Veszprem Blues Festival in mid April:

Over four days selections of my Blues Art where displayed in every corner of the venue's three floors and many were expanded to life-size, framing up various points inside and out, as backdrops to the main stages, as well as free-hanging from the ceiling.
When taking part in a large scale exhibition like this, the drawback is I don't get to draw much, but was scheduled to perform a few sets.

The first day I arrived at the venue to discover how the exhibition was displayed, as I was walking in, a dude passing by me stopped and said "Are you the guy who did all this art? Just amazing man!" That turned out to be Kid Anderson, guitarist with the legendary harp player Rick Estrin. I then saw Rick, Kid and members of the band gathered, preparing to soundcheck and went over to greet Rick. Rick immediately mentioned how much he enjoyed the art exhibition, seeing many tributes to his own idols, but confided that the one I did of Paul Oscher truly hit home with him.
He started to tell me that he and Paul were best buddies for over 50 years and I also shared that before Paul passed away in April 2021, I was working on illustrations closely with him for a possible book of his stories.

I also mentioned that Rick himself was on my short list to capture on paper.I'd never seen Rick perform live and was definitely looking forward to it and found my place in the packed room. Over the course of the first few songs, something happened to this old, wary, blues consumer that I didn't quite expect; I suddenly fell in love with the Blues again!

Of course I LOVE the Blues, but this band, the way they interacted, the level of professionalism, yet playfulness and WAY over the top beyond; I fell in love all over again with what makes a GREAT Blues band work. It was like nothing I'd ever heard and everything I ever loved at the same time.

I was so inspired, I decided at that moment that I desperately needed to document and create references to somehow capture the spirit of how this amazing ensemble interacted together, snapping pics and films short segments to study.
After, I went backstage and Rick & the "Kid" were relaxing and I thanked them for a great, inspired show, revealing that I decided when I returned home will do an illustration of the whole band and a gift to them. I can get into a whole lot more and will reserve that for an article I'll write up for the next issue of BM about this great event in Hungary. For now I will just share with you the result of what I simply could not wait to get home and start creating. Recently I shared this completed piece with Rick and the band; Kid, D'mar, Lorenzo and they all told me they simply love it.

So, this illustration represents the culmination of everything wonderful that happened during this Veszprem Blues Festival, reconnecting with incredible Blues music, and going beyond inspiration, connecting the lines & love of Blues to put it all back together on paper!

PS; I also got to send Rick a print of my Paul Oscher tribute he was fond of, just token of appreciation…

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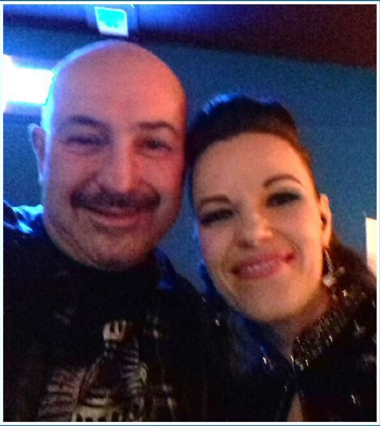
READERS WITH THE STARS

Got an image and a story of you meeting one of the stars of the blues? Send it into design@bluesmatters.com and you may just find your mugshot in the next issue of Blues Matters!



"This is me with Erja Lyytinen at HRH Blues in Sheffield in April 2019, when she was promoting her Another World album".

Brian Rowe

I live in South Africa but travel up mainly for blues cruises as we get little music of such class here, except Dan Patlansky. Here are a few pics from a Mediterranean Blues cruise in Aug 2022 , the best way to catch up with some great rock/blues all at once.
Highly recommended !!
Elles Bailey & Samantha Fish.

Matthew Kretzmer

EVANGELICAL GUITAR WOMEN

By Dani Wilde

Today I'd like to celebrate the artistry of three phenomenal blues/gospel guitar women, who fused pioneering southern blues picking with spiritual vocal styles.

Evangelical guitar street musicians performed in American towns and cities from the 1930's depression era, through to the 1950s. Some of the best of these artists found their way onto record, and a few of them like Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Rev. Gary Davis are still celebrated today. Many others fell into obscurity. Whilst 'guitar playing' was stereotypically recognised as 'a man's game', there was a wonderful sub-tradition of 'Gospel Guitar Women' that included African American artists Mother McCollum, Sister O.M. Terrell, Willie Mae Williams, Marylin Scott and Flora Molton.

Sister O M Terrell

Sister Terrell was born Ola Mae Terrell in 1911, Atlanta. At the impressionable age of 11, she attended a Summer tent revival at the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church where she was converted to the Holiness Movement.

Musicologist Bruce Nemerov explains that "Among poor blacks and whites, Holiness was a reaction to the increased formality and worldliness of the Baptist and Methodist churches. Holiness people didn't smoke, drink or attend secular entertainments. Holiness told them to live apart and Holiness told them to sing fervently and make a joyful noise onto the Lord, which they did - on guitars, banjos, mandolins, horns or pianos, whatever was at hand."

Sister Terrell taught herself to play guitar and soon began to compose her own songs. She fused country blues guitar styles with spiritual lyrics that expressed her holiness faith. Throughout the depression of the 1930's, through to the post war rock n roll era of the 1950's and beyond, Terrell played kickass guitar at a time when female guitarists were hugely under represented. For 75 years she supported herself, performing her own inspiring material on street corners, parks and churches in poor Southern neighbourhoods. Her songs spread a message of hope and comfort to those who listened, and were especially appreciated by those who had fall on on hard times, who needed some inspiration.

In 1953, Sister Terrell was scouted by America's largest record label Columbia, and invited to record six of her songs. Strangely, Columbia released the tracks in their Country music series. Bruce Nemerov explains how this was to her detriment because "African-American customers who'd happily bought other gospel records had no way to know she was one of their own." Just two years later, she was dropped from the label.

During the 1960's blues and folk revival, when artists like The Staple Singers, Odetta and Sister Rosetta Tharpe found themselves relaunched back into the spotlight with a new young, white audience, Sister Terrell remained hidden from popular culture. That is until the 2000's when her music was reissued on compact disc, and used in a theatre production. Nemerov, editor of the book 'Lost Delta Found' was asked to track Terrell down to ensure she received her royalties. He found her at a nursing home in Conyers, Georgia, and he recalled how "the money provided some material comfort those last years." Sister Terrell passed away at the age of 95 in 2006.

Be sure to check out:

- "God's Little Birds"
- "I'm Going To That City"

These original Sister O M Terrell track showcase her exciting blues picking, vestapol tuning, and slide guitar style, as well as gritty, highly emotive vocal performances.

Mother McCollum

Billed as "Sanctified Singer with Guitar," Mississippi Guitar Woman Mother McCollum delivered passionate spiritual vocals and rocking bluesy guitar. Very little is known of her background, but in the Summer of 1930, she recorded six tracks for Vocalion Records in Chicago, including her stand out, self penned, track "Jesus is my air-o-plane". The foot stomping track is spiritual in its lyrical content, but her accomplished guitar style is rooted in the blues.

Some music historians have pondered over McCollum's mysterious identity. It was as if she came out of no-where, recorded these wonderful songs, and then disappeared forever. Blues historian and record collecter John Tefteller has considered that "She just may be the mother of [Mississippi blues singer] Robert Nighthawk [1909-1967]. Nighthawk's real name is Robert Lee McCollum", Tefteller explains, "and he is known to be the father of Sam Carr, aka Samuel Lee McCollum. So that would make Mother McCollum the grandmother of musician Sam Carr [1926-2009]." Of course, there is no concrete evidence, but for those who love Mother McCollum's music, the prospect is

exciting. Sadly, her fanbase is small as she fell into obscurity. Her fabulous records are so rare that only three or four copies still exist, and they are worth thousands of dollars. Thankfully we can now hear and enjoy her music online.

Be sure to check out:

- "Jesus is my air-o-plane" - Full of character, this track showcases memorable song writing, distinctive country blues picking and tasteful slide guitar with a catchy gospel vocal.

Sister Rosetta Tharpe

My favourite of the Gospel guitar women has to be The God-Mother of Rock'n'roll, Sister Rosetta Tharpe. Despite being the most celebrated of the female gospel guitarists, when you consider her huge impact on popular music, she is remains underrated.

"All this new stuff they call rock 'n' roll, why, I've been playing that for years now…"

— Sister Rosetta Tharpe in an interview with Daily Mirror in 1957

Sister Rosetta was born in Arkansas in 1915, twenty years before Elvis Presley came into this world and over a decade before Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley.

The daughter of two cotton pickers, the young Sister Rosetta became a black, female, pioneer of rock 'n' roll guitar. She played it better than anyone else, before anyone else. This is the woman who invented THAT sound and showed her male successors how to do their thing. Artists who have named Sister Rosetta Tharpe as a big influence range from Little Richard to Johnny Cash and Tina Turner.

Encouraged by her Mother, Rosetta was a prodigy who began singing and playing the guitar for audiences in church from the early age of four. At six years of age 'Little Rosetta Nubin'

and her Mother had formed a trio that toured all over the Southern States playing religious concerts that billed Rosetta as a "singing and guitar playing miracle".

Rosetta eventually settled in Chicago where in her late teens she married a preacher named Thomas Tharpe who had accompanied her and her mother on many of their tours. Although they divorced after only a few years, Sister Rosetta kept his surname.

In her early twenties, Sister Rosetta left her husband and travelled to New York City where she made her first ever recording. Backed by Lucky Millinder's jazz orchestra, she recorded four songs for the record label Decca: "Rock Me," "That's All," "My Man and I" and "The Lonesome Road". These were the first gospel songs that Decca had ever released and they became instant hits. Sister Rosetta Tharpe became an overnight star, and was one of the very first commercially successful gospel artists.

Sister Rosetta's early releases caused a stir amongst the church community. Her pioneering blend of gospel lyrics and secular sounding 'rocking blues' guitar angered many traditional gospel fans. Equally though, she reached out to a much broader audience who loved her. She was a guitar hero who played flashy, exciting solos that paved the way for artists like Chuck Berry. A young Elvis Presley used to rush home from school every day in Tupelo to listen to Sister Rosetta on the WELO gospel radio show. Like Elvis Presley, Sister Rosetta maddened her more conservative audiences by 'moving too much on stage' when she felt the need to groove to the deep rhythms she created. Elvis would later take this to a new extreme when he earned the nickname 'Elvis the Pelvis'.

Throughout the late 1930's, Sister Rosetta's fame grew along with her notoriety as she played gospel music alongside jazz and blues musicians to secular audiences at venues including Harlem's Cotton Club and Carnegie Hall. The mere fact that she was a woman, 'playing guitar like a man' caused controversy. Despite this, her up-tempo compositions 'This Train" and "Rock Me" became big hits among audiences who had had little previous exposure to gospel music.

In 1964, when electric blues music was at a peak of popularity, she toured Europe as part of the 'Blues and Gospel Caravan'. The caravan featured artists including Muddy Waters, Otis Spann, Reverend Gary Davis, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee. Sister Rosetta quickly earned the huge respect of her fellow blues musicians.

On Sister Rosetta's tombstone are engraved the words:

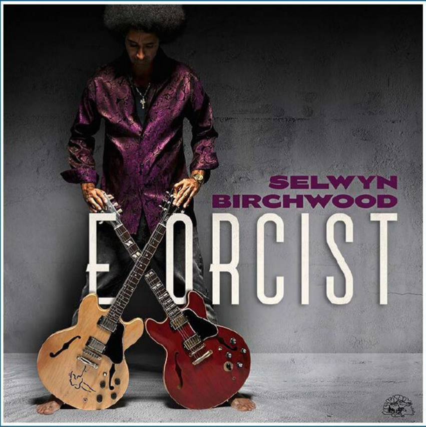
"She would sing until you cried, and then she would sing until you danced for joy. She kept the church alive and the saints rejoicing."

Even more importantly, she knocked down walls and opened doors for every female musician who followed in her footsteps. She was an innovator who fused black spirituals with the blues in a unique and exciting way. Way ahead of her time, the Godmother, Sister Rosetta Tharpe indeed helped to invent the sound of Rock'n'Roll as we know it.

Be sure to check out:

- "That's All" - Tharpe began recording with electric guitar in the 1940s. This song is said to have had a big influence on Chuck Berry and Elvis Presley.
- "Up Above My Head" – The vocal delivery and guitar playing on this tune are ballsy, fantastic and one of a kind.

VISIONARY FLORIDA BLUESMAN SELWYN BIRCHWOOD TO RELEASE NEW ALBUM, EXORCIST



On Friday, June 9, award-winning Florida bluesman Selwyn Birchwood will release Exorcist, his highly anticipated fourth Alligator Records release. The young guitarist, lap steel player, songwriter and vocalist sets a course for the future of the blues with his visionary, original music.

He calls it "Electric Swamp Funkin' Blues," an intoxicating mix of deep blues, blistering, psychedelic-tinged rock, booty-shaking funk and sweet Southern soul, played and sung with fire-and-brimstone fervor. Tastemaker Americana music magazine No Depression says, "Selwyn Birchwood reaches back in the blues tradition to launch something out of this world." Exorcist will be available on purple vinyl LP, CD and at all popular streaming and download sites. The first single, the ripped-from-the-headlines howler FLorida Man, will hit radio and streamers on Tuesday, May 9.

On Exorcist, Birchwood delivers the most far-reaching, musically adventurous album of his career. Recorded in Florida and produced by Grammy Award-winner Tom Hambridge, each of the 13 vividly detailed songs was written and arranged by Birchwood. The soul-baring tracks all hit with lasting rhymes and unexpected rhythms. Each twists its own tale, ranging from the love-gone-wrong Horns Below Her Halo to the love-gone-terrifying Exorcist to the autobiographical Underdog.

According to Blues Music Magazine, "Selwyn Birchwood heralds a fresh, exciting new direction in the blues. Toe-tapping, hip-shaking, joyful and inviting…expansive and focused, exploratory and time-honored, but always original."

KEEPING THE BLUES ALIVE AT SEA VIII

Anita Schlank   Laura Carbone

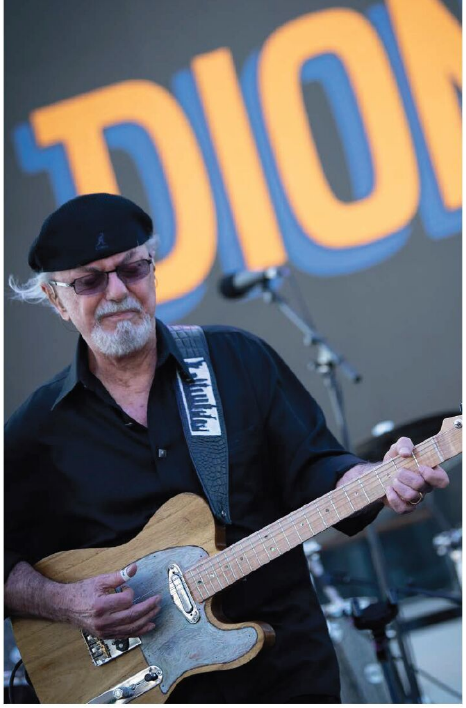
There are increasing numbers of music-themed cruises from which to choose; however, even those that are similarly blues-based have their own unique personality.

The Keeping the Blues Alive at Sea (KTBAS) cruise was founded by blues-rocker and former child prodigy Joe Bonamassa, who was playing guitar at age four and opening for BB King by age twelve. Bonamassa is also known for being a collector of guitars, owning more than 400 of them. Therefore, it was not surprising that the lineups for the KTBAS cruises always include many other guitar virtuosos. The most recent KTBAS cruise this past March was no exception, and featured pedal-steel guitar great Robert Randolph, master of the slow blues, Larry McCray, celebrated slide guitarist Jack Broadbent, and British sensation Joanne Shaw Taylor. In addition, the hottest collaboration in blues-rock currently, The Blood Brothers, (comprised of Mike Zito and Albert Castiglia) were also featured. However, Bonamassa did not forget how important it is to have outstanding singers as well. Therefore, the list of invited musicians also included phenomenal vocal performers such as Bobby Rush, Jimmy Hall, and Mike Farris. Bonamassa's performances are always impressive, and they are made that much better by the contributions from his outstanding backup singers. One of the backup singers, Jade McCrae, earned her own showcase this year.

The KTBAS cruises are well-planned and highly organized. Cruisers were eased into their day with acoustic sets to begin their mornings. They also had opportunities to attend shows with specialized themes, such as a jam paying tribute to the Allman Brothers, which was hosted by Maggie Rose. Bonamassa owns his own record label, so one show included collaborations between several of the artists featured on his label. Additionally, a "campfire" session provided the opportunity for Mike Zito, Mike Farris, Bobby Rush, Maggie Rose, and members of Little Feat to share stories about some of their favorite songs before performing them.

The KTBAS cruise is also an excellent opportunity for lesser-known artists to gain a wider audience, and those who attended the shows by Ghost Hounds and Robert Jon & the Wreck soon became new fans. Evenings often ended with a jam session which was hosted by Jimmy Vivino, who is perhaps best known for being Conan O'Brien's musical director for 26 years.

While the excellent musical lineups are certainly sufficient to convince people to sail, they should be aware that the KTBAS cruises also raise money for a very important cause. Bonamassa's Keeping the Blues Alive Foundation's mission is to preserve music programs in schools. The Foundation has also provided extensive financial assistance to musicians who were negatively affected by the pandemic due to lost gigs. Additional information about the Keeping the Blues Alive Foundation can be found at www.keepingthebluesalive.org And, additional information about the KTBAS annual cruise, (and the KTBAS annual cruise that sets sail from Europe) can be found at www.keepingthebluesaliveatsea.com.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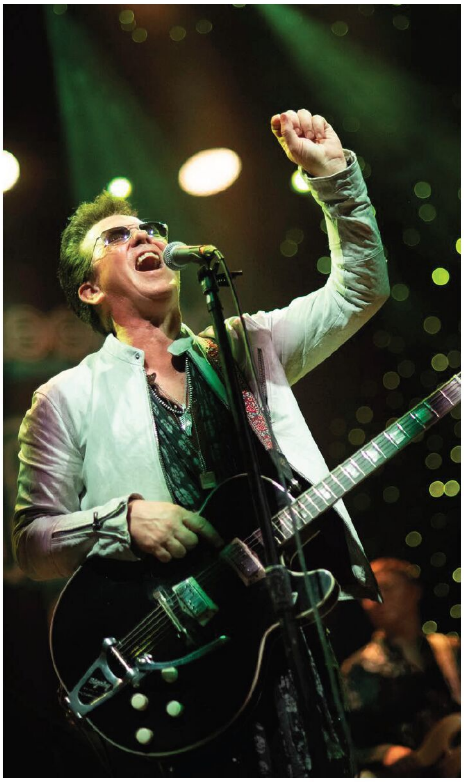

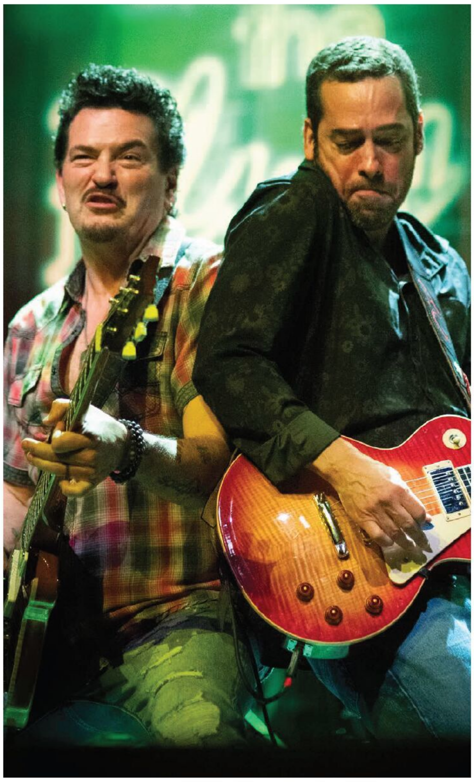

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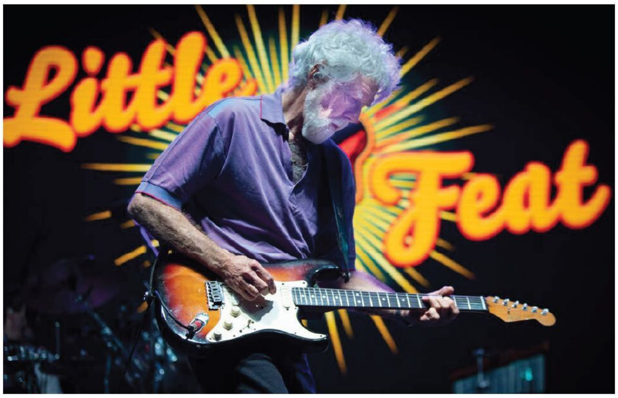

Little Feat

UK BLUES AWARDS 2023

Richard Dunning   John Bull & Manuela Langotsch

The UK Blues Federation in association with Marshall presented the fifth UK Blues Awards on 13th April at London's Bush Hall.

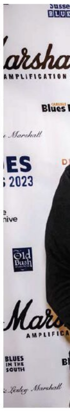
On arrival one thing was clear - this was a sold out show and the queue before doors opened stretched down the road. Wandering along that queue it was great to see so many recognisable names from the scene waiting to get in. This was a night that everyone came together and not only were we there for a celebration but there was also a lot of networking going on!

Once in and seated the show kicked off with an intro from the present Chair of The UK Blues Federation, Richard Dunning, before handing over the mic to our host for the evening, Paul Jones. The format for the evening was simple: the announcement of two or three Awards and then live music from some of the Finalists and that worked perfectly. We were treated to fantastic sets from Alice Armstrong and her band, Sari Schorr & Matt Long, Toby Lee and his band, Elles Bailey with Joe Wilkins and Demi Mariner and, to round off the evening, Brave Rival. A line up that as well as undoubtedly contributing to the rush for tickets, not only brought the house to it's feet but also ably demonstrated the incredible female talent that we have in the UK at present (though Toby as the sole male band leader, more than held his own!).

We won't detail all the Award recipients here (a full list of Finalists and those that picked up the Awards is at https://www.ukblues.org/awards/) but there were two given that were outside the normal nominations. The first of these was the annual 'Unsung Hero' Award, given to recognise someone who works tirelessly in the background without having the spotlight turned on them. This went to Matt Williams for his work at Wentworth Blues and, presently, the annual Old Bush Blues. The second of those unlisted Awards was truly unlisted and kept secret from everyone until the moment that Paul Jones started his closing speech. It was at that moment that he was interrupted and we were advised that The UK Blues Federation would be introducing annual 'Lifetime Achievement' Awards and that the first of those was to go to Paul Jones himself. To say that Paul was taken by surprise was putting it mildly, but that surprise soon turned to delight and the Award was well deserved.

To highlight two other Awards; when an artist or band win a particular Award three times they are inducted into The UK Blues Hall of Fame. Already in there are Dom Martin for Acoustic Artist and Connor Selby for Young Artist. This year we had two additions as we saw When Rivers Meet collecting the Band of The Year Award and Elles Bailey collecting the Artist of The Year, both for the third time. This year really was a special year for Elles as she also picked up the Awards for Vocalist of The Year and Album of The Year for 'Shining In The Half Light'.

So, a great night out and a great way to celebrate the ever-changing and growing Blues scene in the UK. Roll on next year! For further information head to www.UKBlues.org where, to ensure you're the first to get all the news and to show your support for all they do you can join The UK Blues Federation.



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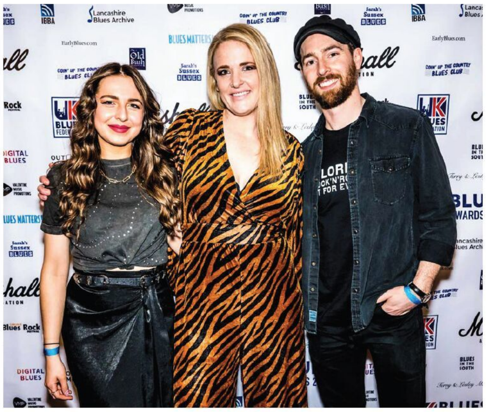


Brian Kramer's

INTERNATIONAL BLUES JAM

25th Year Anniversary

Brian Kramer   Anders Rydell & Marianne Forsell

It was a simple idea, not necessarily a unique one. After about a year of relocating to Sweden from Brooklyn with my family, I was asked candidly by Pelle Wisten, the headmaster of a Stockholm culture school where I was doing a series of guitar workshops a question, "Is there anything musically you miss about New York?"

Thinking for a moment I replied; "Well, there are no Blues Jams anywhere here in Sweden. A place where musicians of all levels can meet up and work out their Blues together". I explained the whole Blues Jam culture and mentality; a watering hole of sorts and then he inquired "Why can't we do that here?"

I replied that it was a big undertaking; equipment, location, funding, to which he answered with a smile; "Well, I do have a school here, we can back you and provide all the gear.

This was in 1998 and what set in motion a plan to assimilate the formula for what I knew of a functioning Blues Jam environment from my personal experience, but with Scandinavian accessibilities.

Fast forward a quarter century and now, we celebrate our 25th Anniversary in the heart of Stockholm's Old Town and everything imagined and hoped has blossomed beyond my wildest dreams!

15 minutes before we were to kick into a 10 hour, unpredictable, marathon Blues Jam celebration, I went up to Mats Qwarfordt; harp player extraordinaire and my partner in the House Band, initiating this from day one. I asked him to take a little stroll to just have a some "us time" before the madness was unleashed.

We started down the cobble-stoned streets of the Old Town, beautiful sunny day, easily reflecting back on key moments through this whole process. We recalled those who first started with us and those who are no longer here but left an indelible mark on our lives.

How inconceivable this all seemed, trying to get "shy Swedes", who have no historic relationship to an improvisational, real-time Blues Jam experience to feel welcome to free-fall without a parachute. Suddenly we found ourselves on the other side of the Old Town, in front of the Legendary Club Stampen where we started this all off and continued for 18 glorious years, before change of ownership stalled and compromised the integrity of our vision and forced us to relocate/seek out Engelen. Both of us had not stepped foot inside Stampen for 7 years and I said "Let's go in and just say thank you to the room itself for giving us this great gift to unfold here!" It felt right, had to be done, and just like that we came full circle!

Without going further into my own synopsis, I would like to submit these wonderful words and personal account from established local photojournalist Anders Rydell who attended our mega celebration on April 1st 2023.

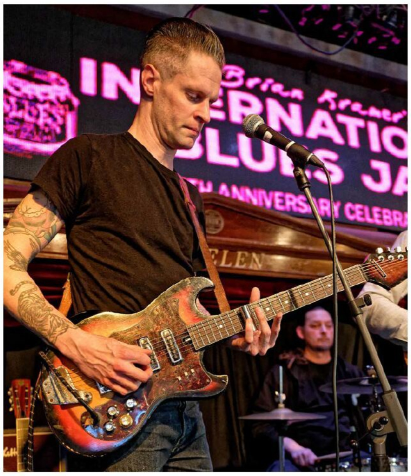
"Imagine you're a New York blues man, having relocated to Stockholm, Sweden, where would you spend your 60th birthday? How about the music pub Engelen in Gamla Stan? More specifically? How about on stage, doing what you have been doing just about every Saturday afternoon for almost 25 years: arranging and "project managing" blues jams. And, of course, playing guitar and singing as well.

This is exactly what accomplished and appreciated blues artist and general great guy Brian Kramer did. And as fate would have it, April 1st 2023 was both his birthday and the 25th anniversary of his recurring International Blues Jam. He has more or less singlehandedly transformed a non-existent Stockholm blues scene 25 years ago into the very vibrant situation of today. Double congrats, Brian, and Thank You! I hereby proclaim the name change of April fool's day to April Blues Day, and that's no joke.

Brian has played with, and supported, so many musicians over the years that the anniversary was extended from an afternoon to at least 10 hours straight, well into the night, to give as many of them as possible a chance to join Brian on stage. (I'm not sure when it all ended, as you probably know, a blues jam can go on forever, but I had to leave at 9.30PM.) There is no way I could have kept track of all of their names during the seven hours I attended, but there are two that I'd like to mention:

Stevie Klasson, for personal reasons. I bought a Strat from Stevie in 2017 (I still have it); I only wish I could squeeze even remotely as much blues out of a Fender as he can, effortlessly, from the looks of it. And Isabella Lundgren. Here's an indeed well established (mostly) jazz singer that I first had the pleasure of hearing live and photographing in 2015, when she was very young but still bursting with talent and feeling. She definitely has no need to use the Engelen stage to build a reputation (even though she deserves even more recognition than she is getting, if you ask me), and still this celebrated artist uses part of her Saturday afternoon to contribute to the celebrations on exactly the same premises as everyone else: Just for the fun of it, and as a tribute to Brian.

Brian had a lot of anecdotes from the past 25 years to share, from the humble beginnings to today, but one of his early memories resonated a little extra with me: The early



sessions at Kaos, a restaurant in Gamla Stan, now reincarnated as an Irish pub. This was a place where a lot of not quite well established performers were given stage time. And yes, the Swedish name means exactly what it implies, but order was kept at bay by the owner. Nostalgia almost overtook me when this was mentioned, since I did some gigs there way back. I´m not sure if Brian and I ever played the same night since I, playing strictly acoustic material, was referred to the basement stage, ten feet closer to hell according to popular geographic definitions.

Instead, our paths crossed for the first time during the 2017 Old Town Blues Day, a recurring event arranged by the Stockholm Blues Society, another institution that might not have existed, or been as significant, had it not been for Mr. Kramer. He played an acoustic duo gig with Mats Qwarfordt, a great harmonica player, in the basement of Plugged Records, another venue that sadly is no more. Mats was one of the first musicians Brian connected with after having moved to Stockholm, and they have been partners in blues ever since. It goes without saying that Mats was an integral and busy part of the celebrations.

Not only was keeping track of all the names of the performers impossible; I had no way of doing a complete photographical expose of all of them. This is partly because I unfortunately couldn't stay the whole event, but also because Engelen was completely packed with people, so my chances of moving around to capture everyone were very limited. Thus, there are almost no photos of entire sets of performers on stage. I claimed a tiny territory in a corner below the stage and did as best I could, given the circumstances. However, I wasn't at Engelen in a journalistic capacity, but to provide a belated birthday present to Brian, which is also why I have kept this text at a rather personal level."
- Anders Rydell

So, I wrap this up with a warm gesture of appreciation and thanks to all who have contributed to the ongoing vibe and success of our little Blues scene that has spread throughout, Sweden, Scandinavia, and welcomed countless musicians from across the globe.

If I have one proud source of "bragging rights", it is for the incredible fruition and advent of a healthy youth culture with a growing depth and desire to explore and understand the Blues.

So many young men and women in barely their teens daringly stepped upon our Blues Jam scene for the first time over the quarter century, and many have developed into focused, professional touring and recording artists. That's really the only thing that I understand that keeps the Blues alive, fresh, and moving forward into a healthy future!

A chapter documented about Scandinavian Blues from the book Encyclopedia of the Blues by Edward M. Komara reads;
"One important step in broadening the interest in blues music (in Sweden) was the starting in the late 1990s of jam sessions in Stockholm by the American singer and guitar player Brian Kramer."

TOMMY ARCH

Tommy Arch has a high profile in the UK as drummer with Newcastle upon Tyne based Americana folk/blues rockers Holy Moly & The Crackers. The band's lead singer and multi-instrumentalist Ruth Lyon also makes good use of Tommy's impeccable bass guitar skills when she performs and records with her own band. He launched himself as a solo artist a couple of years ago by using a residency at the prestigious international concert venue Sage Gateshead to produce a live video performance of "Anywhere I Look". The song featured on social media and national television, his gutsy, smooth and soulful voice described as reminiscent of early Springsteen. "Lucky" is Tommy's first debut single out now on major music streaming platforms. Electric and acoustic performances of the song can be viewed on YouTube.
In Tommy's words: 'It's always hard to explain what you do and why you do it. Somebody recently described what I do as a "Soulful, timeless, folk" which I think isn't far off. I'm just making the music I've always wanted to make, the good old way, straight onto tape. I try to write songs that mean something to me and hopefully mean something to you too. "Lucky" is a song full of optimism. It comes with a promise and a disclaimer. It's saying no matter how bad things get, or how dark things might seem, there's always a glimmer of hope to cling onto. And if you try hard enough or wait long enough then you can be lucky, at least sometimes.'

The key ingredients contributing to the potential success of this debut single include: Tommy's decade of experience as a professional musician, specifically his current band role as backing vocalist; his song writing acumen; and the decision to work with Kitty and Lewis from Kitty, Daisy & Lewis the multi-million streamed blues, soul and rock and roll siblings from London. A further bonus is using the family's own recording studio consisting of mostly vintage analogue and custom in-house built equipment which gives the sound a distinctive flavour. "Lucky" is an affable, laid back, cool track with a country blues vibe and a positive message to lift the spirits. The reflective lyrics explore the reality of life as it is: 'You've seen a little bit of the world/And you know what it's all about/You know how to suffer/And when to just run for cover.' As Tommy explains, 'It is a song for our times but the central message points to a better future especially if your luck holds out and you don't lose heart.'

As Lewis concludes: 'Tommy's energy is divine and I hope he becomes a star.'

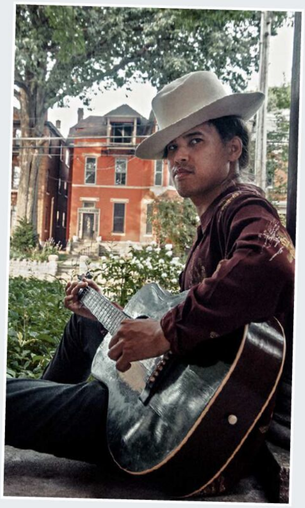
NAT MYERS

This Korean-American blues poet keeps to the old traditional acoustic blues finger picking style. He's very much n touch with his heritage and uses this in his unique song writing style, In his own words: I thought I would talk about my new album, Yellow Peril, and myself. I play blues; to play them you got to be blue, but that isn't necessarily the best for healthy living! But if you know in your soul, that ungraspable phantom of life, that fire burning underwater—that is the blues. I still call myself a student of that ancient boogie.

Truth told I never thought I would write a record or be able to make music for my living. You could say Dan Auerbach and M Allen Parker set me on my feet and showed me I can run. I originally wanted to be a poet, but always listened to that old blues style, Sylvester Weaver, Son House, Memphis Minnie, as deep a cut as I'd be allowed. It was not until starting busking that I realised the blues is what a poet should be doing. Not long after that I went up to New York, to chase something, or someone, a love that doesn't say your name. I got taken in with the Jalopy school of folk music in New York. I owe Feral Foster for his powerful sound & for reading his spam folder, he is a modern blues influencer. During the pandemic all I had, like most folks, was time hunkering down back home, you could tell when things started getting weird, I started getting some ideas, I put out some hot takes and started beating on the box and bleating like a lamb. Things started taking hold. Good friends rubbed my shoulders and invited me into a new world. I started getting some gigs, was gasping instead of drowning.

Dan Auerbach reached out to me and liked my music, things moved on, it was easy as that. We wrote ten songs, some by my lonesome, others with musicians I deeply admire, like Pat McLaughlin and Alvin Youngblood Hart. They are the true poets. All the other crooked ones started meeting me at this crooked place.

We all spent a few summer days in the Tennessee heat, and we finished the album Yellow Peril. This record doesn't just give me hope that the old sound isn't dead, it reaffirms that it remains the punkiest shit you can be doing right now, young & frenetic like wide hips & a little gut. This ain't even the half of it. This ain't even a scratch at it. There's plenty more where this came from.



WILLIAM LEE ELLIS

IMAGE: JERRY SWOPE

Yellow Dog Records announces a June 23rd release date for Ghost Hymns, a new album from tradition-bred songsmith and fleet fingerpicker William Lee Ellis. Ghost Hymns was co-produced by Ellis, River Hartley, and Larry Nager and recorded – as the pandemic allowed – over 18 months, July 2021-January 2023. Ellis's trademark sound, a personalized mix of acoustic blues, folk, bluegrass, and world music, is on full display for Ghost Hymns, an album that veers effortlessly from gospel, shape note, and blues to old-time, ragtime, and high life on twelve original compositions and arrangements.

"It has been a few years since I last recorded for the roots label, Yellow Dog Records," William Lee Ellis says "During that time, I stepped into the world of academia and earned a PhD in ethnomusicology at the University of Memphis under famed blues scholar David Evans. No surprise, my dissertation was on the music of Rev. Gary Davis." He then left the Bluff City, his home of 15 years, for Vermont, where he is an Associate Professor of Music and Chair of the Fine Arts Department at Saint Michael's College.

"Conceived during Covid when the world had shut down – and away from the rooted sense of place that had long been Memphis for me – Ghost Hymns bears its own stamp of time and place thanks to the global virtuosi in Vermont and beyond I have come to know as friends. This album reflects those friendships, heard as musical conversations with a traveled reach and reverence for the voices of traditions past. This is the heart of traditional music and of the music I write, with one ear ever bent to the pre-WWII blues and gospel pioneers, the buskers and street players, the famous and obscure alike, whose riffs and rhymes bore witness to an often cruel and indifferent world and whose music personally remains a musical if not moral guide."

First and second takes were the norm with most everything cut live. Befitting the punk ethos of co-producer/engineer/mixer, River Hartley, sessions were recorded on the fly, from dorm rooms to recital halls, "doing our best to keep dogs, noisy heating ducts, and overhead fighter jets out of the final mix," laughs Ellis.

William Lee Ellis comes by his musical prowess naturally. His father, North Carolina native Tony Ellis, is a veteran of Bill Monroe's early-'60s Blue Grass Boys. Tony Ellis – the inaugural Ohio Heritage Fellowship recipient for performing arts in 2003 – is able to drive the five-string with the best of them, as he did on the acclaimed 1993 Masters of the Banjo tour and album produced by the National Council for Traditional Arts. Bill backed his father for decades on record and tours, and his father's influence can be heard throughout Ghost Hymns. "More than any of my previous albums, I hear the weight of my dad's musical imprint on my own, which is perhaps why I've chosen this album to finally play some banjo and arrange one of his most elegant fiddle tunes." The journey fittingly ends where it began: "It's a family trait, I guess. I may not share his bluegrass tenure, but I'd like to think I carry forward my father's gifts of tone and melodic craft and the ability to personalize tradition."

MICHAEL JEROME BROWNE

Calling himself "A Child Of The Blues" Michael Jerome Browne revisits the songs of his youth – those that he learned to play when he first picked up a guitar and that stuck with him through nearly five decades as a Roots music performer and historian. A major player, Browne is well-known to UK and European audiences often due to his tasteful support picking and billing with Eric Bibb. However, Browne is far more than just a support act; this is a guy who deserves top-billing wherever he appears. His history is faultless and his place as a top roots and blues artist is assured internationally. Now with a new album about to drop, 'Getting' Together', he is aiming higher than ever.

A musician's musician, when he isn't performing his own material he is in demand backing up and recording with other artists, most notably Eric Bibb, whose 2017 Grammy nominated CD "Migration Blues" he co-produced, played and sang on.

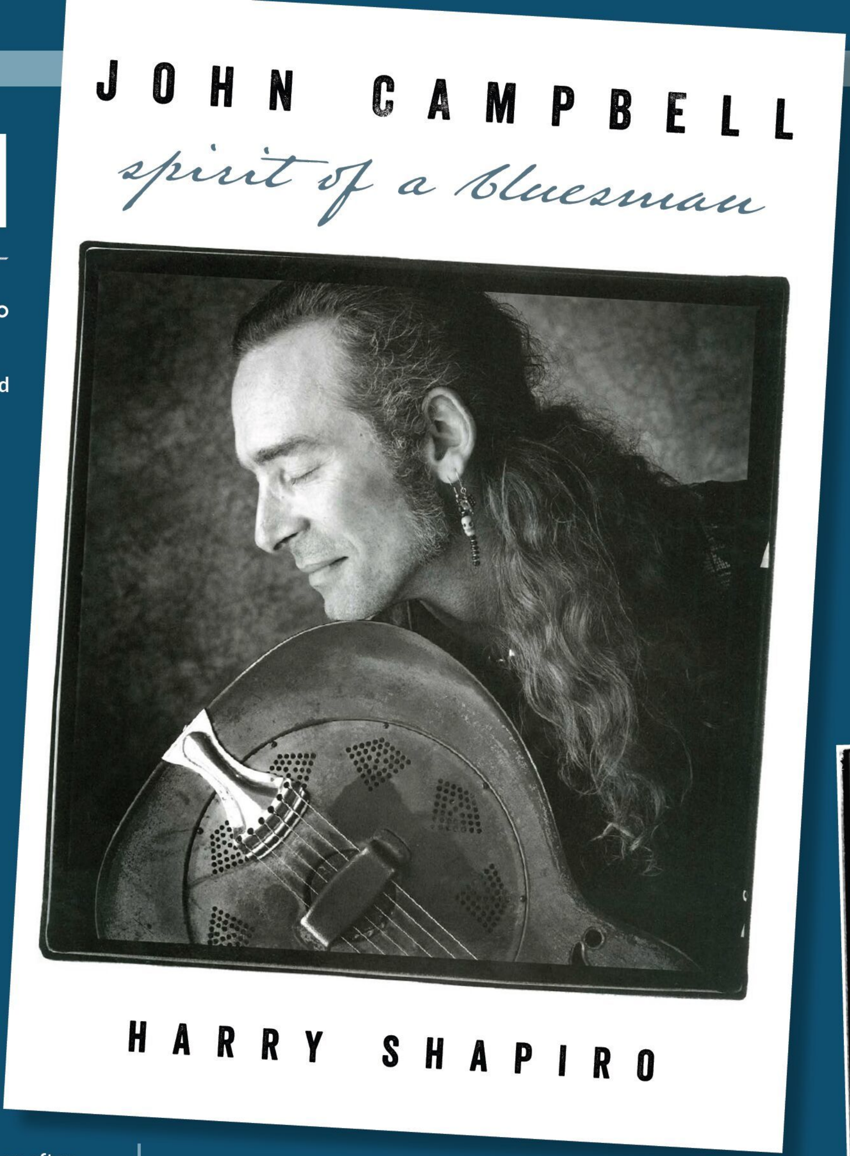
Whether he's gliding a slide across his resonator guitar, creating an intense mood with his tremolo 12-string guitar, or "hammering the claw" on his gourd banjo, Michael's passion and virtuosity always shine through. In the true tradition of folk music, his performances inspire us to see the interconnections between the many cultures and influences that gave birth to American Roots Music. Gospel, Blues, Old-Time, Country, Soul and Cajun, expect to hear all of this and more from a performer who's been called a street-smart archivist and when heolute treasure.

This entire album was recorded live off the studio floor as a celebration of being finally able to get musicians back jamming together in person. Michael worked with a number of special guests including Harrison Kennedy, J.J. Milteau, John Sebastian, Eric Bibb and Mary Flower.

Three-time Canadian Folk Music Award winner, recipient of the Blues With A Feeling Award at the 2020 Maple Blues Awards (with 35 nominations since 1999), five-time Juno Award nominee in both the Roots/Traditional and Blues categories, and a Kerrville New Folk Finalist -- Michael Jerome Browne is a multi-instrumentalist, a songwriter, and a living encyclopedia of American Roots music.

SPIRIT OF A BLUESMAN

STEVE YOURGLIVCH   Supplied



''He came out of the Louisiana bayou and was on the verge of international fame when, in 1993, he died aged just 41. He turned down job offers from Albert Collins and Muddy Waters and was on a very short media list to be the next Stevie Ray Vaughan. He wowed Keith Richards and Mick Taylor. Kirk Hammett of Metallica formed a one-off band just to play at John's memorial gig. This was a bluesman like no other.'' That quote from author Harry Shapiro succinctly sums up why John Campbell should be remembered as one of the most significant blues artists of his era. The fact that he isn't is perhaps shrouded in as much mystery as lots of John's life was. Award winning author Harry Shapiro takes on the role of detective to discover John's background and early life, and his journey from severely injured teenage car crash victim to virtuoso guitarist fusing together old school and modern blues.

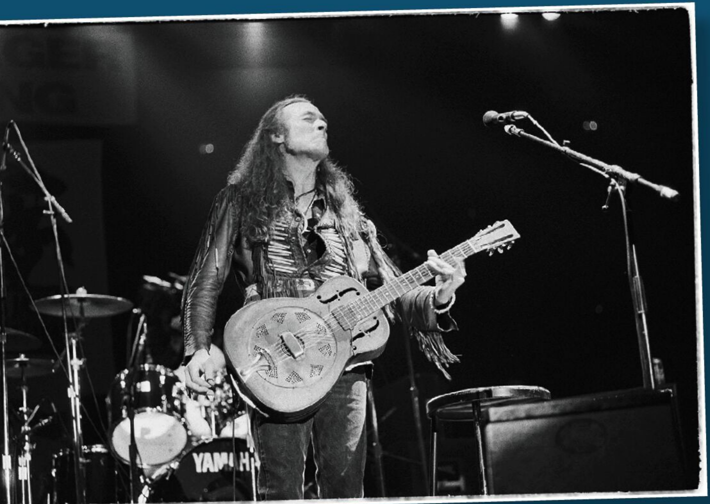
The fact that Harry has been drawn to write this biography tells us something about the pull John and his music has on those that have experienced it. A successful writer whose previous works include biographies about Jimi Hendrix, Alexis Korner, Graham Bond, Jack Bruce, Eric Clapton and most recently Gary Moore. His book, Waiting For The Man: The Story Of Drugs and Popular Music was voted best music book of the twentieth century by the BBC Millennium website. He had been asked by a leading publicist to write about Kurt Cobain but refused, partly because he felt at the time it was too soon after Kurt's untimely passing but mainly because the music didn't resonate enough to rouse the passion required. The lure to write about John had flirted with Harry on and off since 1993 before he finally set about the mission to discover the real John Campbell.

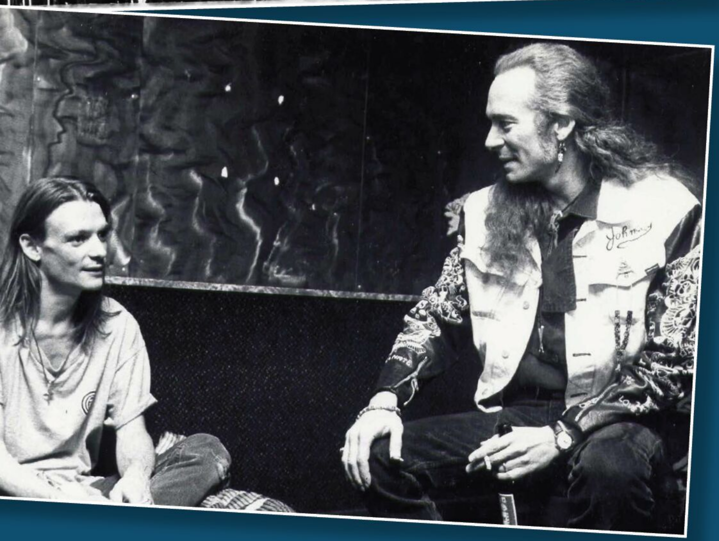
John hadn't come from a traditional blues background. He was born in Shreveport, the youngest of three children to a relatively well-heeled family with connections to a thriving construction business and politics. Like many youngsters at that time John dabbled with playing guitar, inspired in part by the British invasion spearheaded by The Beatles. He flitted in and out of bands with other teenagers, many of whom were much more practised and accomplished. His major life changing event occurred in November 1968. John was in the front passenger seat of the 1964 Chevelle Malibu SS, driven by his friend Tommy, with another friend Jack in the back. Tommy lost control and they slammed into a telegraph pole. The car was shot six feet into the air, the impact meant Jack hit the front seat propelling John through the windscreen and back again. The car bounced back but the accelerator was stuck and so careered into the pole again pushing John through the windscreen and back again. Tommy got off lightly, Jack had two cracked ribs and cuts, he spent three days in hospital. John though was not so lucky. His face was badly slashed, his right eye cut open and popped out, the skin flayed off his chin and a collapsed lung, he had lost a lot of blood. Surgeons miraculously managed to save John's eye by re-inflating it, but his vision was permanently impaired. He needed a huge number of stitches in his facial wounds. The boys were fortunate that the accident happened only minutes away from Schumpet Hospital and paramedics were on the scene quickly. When John was eventually discharged, he spent around nine months recuperating at home, virtually house bound except for medical check-ups. It was during this time that John picked up his guitar and played for lonely hour after lonely hour whilst dealing with the pain and discomfort of his injuries. As John himself later observed, "The guitar became not only something to do when I was alone, but something I could communicate with myself . . . a way to get in touch with your own feelings . . . that you couldn't put into words." Harry compares this period of intense learning and practise to the similar story of Robert Johnson who disappeared for months and returned as a master guitar player to the shock of his peers, creating the blues mythology of the devil at the crossroads. John almost certainly had to face his personal version of hell and playing blues guitar helped in his salvation. Harry told me, 'I was quite cautious about making that comparison for all kind of cultural reasons, but I do think it's valid. As John himself said he could never compare himself or his life to Robert's, his couldn't have been more dangerous. Interestingly, one of the musicians John cited as an influence was harmonica player Deford Bailey, who also practised massively through a long illness, as did Dr John. So from that perspective there are similarities. Another big influence was a black guitarist called Parker Bledsoe. John pretty much sat and watched learning different techniques used by the old blues guys. It wasn't long before John then discovered his biggest influence Lightnin' Hopkins who played a lot of single string solos.'

In later years John was to become the proud owner of Hopkins

National guitar. It had also been played at the funeral of the revered Texas bluesman by Rocky Hill, brother of ZZ Tops Dusty. John discovered it in guitar shop in Houston.

Harry Shapiro does a remarkable job tracing many of John's movements and activities between him leaving home as a late teen before he bites the bullet and moves to New York to further his career in 1989 supported by then girlfriend Davi Abramson. In the interim period John had drifted from place to place mostly playing solo acoustic blues at various roadhouses and juke joints, sometimes staying with friends and family. He was married for a while to Jerry Sue and had his first child Elizabeth but the marriage wasn't too last. John played in bands he set up with other musicians with various degrees of success, most notably Junction, a three piece with Tim Delaney and Jack Haupt. He often got support slots for touring name blues bands who were playing the crawfish circuit which was the white audience equivalent of the chitlin' circuit, and he certainly made deep impressions on whoever saw him play. He received job offers from The Iceman, Albert Collins and no less a figure then Muddy Waters. Although unconfirmed another offer came from ZZ Top. John was always interested in following his own path.





Success didn't happen instantly in New York either. John played in various clubs slowly but surely establishing himself. Crossroads was one such place, that became known as Johns Church, formerly a Vietnamese Restaurant, it morphed into a music venue and helped John's reputation blossom. He worked for a time at the world-famous Matt Umanov Guitars on Bleecker Street. He met top class bluesman Ronnie Earl there who couldn't believe how good John was. Earl supported John, getting him into a studio with his own musicians to record what was to become A Man And his Guitar. Muddy Waters harp legend Jerry Portnoy was in Ronnies band at that time. The album got released by German label Crosscut Records. Sales were good especially in Europe and the release certainly introduced more people to John Campbell.

John's big break though came when Elektra Records A&R man Pete Lubin went along to the Lonestar Roadhouse to see Albert King. Supporting Albert that night was John Campbell and he made a big impression. To such a degree that Lubin recalls 'I then did something that was a complete caricature of a record executive. Something I would never do in a billion years. I went up to him afterwards as he was packing up and did that, "Hey man, love your stuff. Here's my card.' If Lubin was expecting a call the next day he was disappointed, it took a while for John to weigh up the situation before finally following up. From there on though it seemed as if the world was opening for John. Multi Grammy winning producer and song-writer Dennis Walker was brought on board, he had been very instrumental in the success of Robert Cray in popularising the blues again to a younger audience. He loved what he heard in John and the two hit off straight away. They became very close and Dennis has a gift for writing songs that fit the artist perfectly. He gathered together the best musicians for the job, bassist Richard Cousins and keys player Jim Pugh both from Crays band, and drummer Davis McLarty. Others on the sessions included Gary Nicholson, Lee Spath and Jimmy Pettit who became the full-time bassist. The imagery and lyrical content were dark even by blues standards. The album received huge critical acclaim and national and international tours followed both supporting Buddy Guy and headlining in their own right. Anyone who witnessed those shows were left in no doubt John Campbell was a special talent with a big future. New Yorker Zonder Kennedy was by now second guitarist live alongside Pettit and McLarty.

Follow up album Howlin' Mercy followed quickly, Dennis and John creating an even darker and fiercer beast. The original title track was omitted from the final cut as the label deemed it too disturbing to release. It dealt with the subject of child abuse and didn't see the light of day until 30 years later on Malaya Blue album Blue Credentials.

Things were happening in Johns private life too. He had met and married New York socialite Dolly Fox, sometime Andy Warhol model and daughter of a former Miss America. The ceremony was officiated by Dr John and the best man Teddy Galliano who was vice-president of the New York Chapter of Hells Angels.

As preparations were made to tour the album, Robert Medici had already been brought in on drums, a vastly experienced player whose CV included David Bowie, Lou Reed, John Cale, Roger Daltrey and Delbert McClinton. Pettit was unavailable and so former Stevie Ray Vaughan bassist Tommy Shannon had been drafted in. Sadly, at just 41 years old and on the cusp of greatness John died in his sleep. He left a young daughter Paris. Dr John read a eulogy at the funeral and the Hells Angels gave John a guard of honour.

I'm not able in this short resume to do justice to the full John Campbell story. Harry told me he spent three years creating this labour of love. I highly recommend this and the albums. Check out John on You Tube too, live the man was very special.

John Campbell - Spirit of a Bluesman will be available from June 28th at www.harryshapiro.co.uk/buy.

STEPHEN HARRISON'S

RECORD ROUND-UP

BILLIE HOLIDAY
LADY SINGS THE BLUES

Recorded between 1954-1956, and released in 1956, Lady Sings The Blues is something of a miracle album. I say a miracle because America was still firmly within the grip of segregation at this point, Billi Holiday was tormented by her inner demons and racism, I'm genuinely amazed that this record even got made, let alone released. The album itself, for me, is one of the most important albums ever made, both in the blues world and also within the female blues artists' world. The array of musicians on the album is also worth mentioning, drawn from the blues, jazz, and swing scene, they brought their craft and expertise to facilitate Billie Holiday into making this landmark album. Side 1 begins with the title track, Lady Sings The Blues, a solemn, dark song, even though her vocals are if anything slightly subdued. The message comes through with the raw emotion that she puts into the song. This is the first indication of what this album is all about, a history lesson, being told in such a way that you will never want to forget. At the time of the album was recorded and released, Billie Holiday was at her lowest ebb, with a tumultuous marriage, drug addiction, alcoholism, and some of the worst racism faced by any black artist in the Twentieth century. Lady Sings The Blues was the album that brought the song, Strange Fruit to the attention of a worldwide audience. The song began life at the turn of the century as a poem, Billie Holiday recorded it in 1939, but it wasn't until the release of this album that the world became familiar with it. If any song is worthy of being called a history lesson, then surely this is the one. After the success of the album, her life began to spiral even further into despair. She was arrested and put in jail numerous times, the media saying it was due to drug charges. Nothing could have been further from the truth. It was s because she continued to perform Strange Fruit at her shows. This was the authorities trying to subdue and hide the true facts about the song. What the authorities, and indeed the American government didn't expect was how successful this album would go on to be. Of course, Lady Sings The Blues gave us so many other great blues songs, it brought Billie Holiday acclaim that she never could have dreamed of, but the most significant thing that it gave the world was an eye-opening message that will never be forgotten. A truly great album.

NINA SIMONE
PASTEL BLUES

Many of the recordings made by Nina Simone have been a mixture of jazz and blues, sometimes both genres meeting on the same album, and other times albums dedicated to one or the other genre. However, Pastel Blues is a blues album and nothing but blues. Pastel indicates a light, pale aura, this is nowhere near light and pale. First released in 1965, Pastel Blues, for me, epitomizes the true essence and true calling of Nina Simone. The accompanying musicians are the perfect foil for Nina, individually great, but most importantly, collectively adept. Side A opens with Nina singing unaccompanied on Be My Husband, with no backing musicians, just hand-claps fluttering in the background. The power and range of her voice is enough to carry this song through into its finale, where it almost feels like Nina is completely drained by this performance. This echoes all the way through the album, on every track, staring every sinew, emotions on the edge. This is why it still stands as one of the finest female blues albums of all time, and it will continue to be so. Nobody Knows You When You're Down And Out, originally written by Jimmy Cox in 1923, and originally recorded by Bobby Leecan in 1927, has become somewhat of a blues anthem, every major blues artist has at some point added it to their repertoire. The most famous versions are by Bessie Smith and more recently by Eric Clapton. Nina's version is equally as good, just her husky vocals and a piano for company. What more do you need, I hear you say. Side A has six songs in total, whereas Side B only has three songs. But those three songs are sublime. Ain't No Use, Strange Fruit, and the ten minutes long, Sinnerman help to tell an even better story about Nina Simone. Strange Fruit, as we have mentioned on the Lady Sings The Blues album is probably the most harrowing song to ever be recorded. Another album, another history lesson. Just as dark, just as heartbreaking, and just as significant. Sinnerman is loosely based on Nina's recollections of her childhood in revival meetings where her mother was a Methodist minister. It was used to help people confess their sins, when you listen to the lyrics, it's easy to see the connection. Starting like a train gathering speed, billowing steam until it has to slow down for a breath allowing the musicians to take up the slack with guitar, harmonica, and, percussion keeping everything right on the line. Having caught her breath, Nina roars back into action along with the piano, vocals, and keys in perfect harmony only slowing for the solitude of the hand-clapping that brings it to a close leaving the listener just as weary. History lesson Part 2.

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WHISKEY BAYOU RECORDS

GINA COLEMAN

OUTSIDE THE LINES

Colin Campbell Roman Iwasika

Blues Matters got the chance to chat with Gina Coleman at her home. Her band has a new release, Outside The Lines, that mixes blues-infused styles with a modern take. Here she talks about this and her grounding in music which was a very interesting and informative chat. She also reveals insight into some songs on the release.

It was a particularly dreary day but all was good with Gina.

"Grinding away at my day job… Director of Diversity and Inclusion for a Mental Health Agency. Berkshire County. Things are going well. Whenever you put out an album, it's a whirlwind. There are so many moving parts," she explains.

Making Outside the Lines, Gina is quick to run through the process involved:

"New production with this one, we're on a new label, Guitar One Records based in the USA. This has an executive producer, Mark Swersky, two-time Grammy award winner. The sound is different from the last eleven records. We are recorded and mixed by the same sound engineer. By the time we linked up with Mark the entire album had already been recorded. It took about a month after to finish. This album had risen through somebody posting a racially vile comment about one of the songs on the previous album. I've obviously experienced racially divisive situations but not linked to my music. This was how the song The Hate came about. Although people said this was not a blues song, I just wonder about people sometimes and what their interpretation of the genre is! This has Kat Riggins on it, love her. Justin Johnson wanted to be on this track as well as he had been involved on the song that the comment had been made. I tried to process the situation but what I learned afterwards was a little more troubling for me. There were some stations that would not air the song, they thought it inappropriate for their listeners. One particular Global station…This had a negative impact on our income for royalties. Other songs came flooding out to write because of this situation."

I ask, where does your blues comefFrom: "This came from comments about the Hate. I write or co-write all songs. I either hear something and lyrics flow along with this, or someone in my band gives me a little nugget. They send them to me fast and furious. I hear clips and riffs and depending on how I feel the lyrics come."

Every Which Way is another track where Gina is evidently pushing the bounds against oppression and threats: "This is another song looking at how the outer forces try to put you down. The theme is I will rise above this! I have my blues sirens and local musicians doing backing vocals."

"I have a slew of musicians I call the Farm Team who are active professional musicians who are stand-ins for my band members who can't make an event. My harmonica player, Ed Moran helped on this one. He walks his dog and sends me voice recordings."

Gina's is clearly delighted with the track, A Long Time Coming; featuring Eric Gales, it

clearly highlights the power of her writing and music:

"I love his music; he was performing when we did not have a gig. So, our band had a road trip to see him play locally. We went to Daryl Hall's Club. We were standing the whole show and it was great. This was the first show after he had been nominated for a Grammy. By the time I got home I went onto his social media and messaged him to say Misty Blues was in the house tonight, you killed it. I got a response and he saw us! We chatted and I asked if he had a free moment; I've a song you could really grace. He recorded this before going to the Grammy awards. It was incredible fortune. He said, 'I'll make you weep on this one, I promise.' She says with justified delight.

Next, cause we all love a bit of gospel, I raise the track, Judgement Day: "This was a riff that started this with our guitarist Seth Fleischmann sent me. Gospel themes run through my head. It must be being brought up as a Catholic and the guilt!" She laughs.

With another track, an unexpected influence emeges on Dare To Dream: "My son, Diego Mongue, was involved with this. He is nineteen and an integral part of the sound of Misty Blues evolving. He's a Zappa fan, he adds twists a lot during songs. He was doing a school project using six string bass, I heard it and put lyrics to it within fifteen minutes. This is a pallet cleanser. I like doing things that are divergent on my albums."

"It turned out to be an album that speaks about the journey and struggle to get recognised for the work I've been doing for the past twenty-five years, with the odd situation of being a newcomer! We're not on the biggest blues music label - that's a factor. It's not through lack of touring. We do over one hundred and fifty shows a year. We made it to the final of the International Blues Challenge and we've done major festivals. I focus on putting out the best music we can do and enjoying the process. I hope people hear more of us through this album. It would be good to be more recognised. Success is my ability to read the stage at a gig..."

When I query her musical background and influences, Gina steps-up to the plate immediately: "My Grandmother raised me. I never got to hear her sing, only the stories. My mother's twin played saxophone. I grew up in the Projects in the South Bronx. The neighbourhood was predominantly Puerto Rican. There was an ample supply of Motown and Salsa in my house. Rap was also evolving when I was growing up but I never took to that. I loved R&B and Latin music. That's why I wrote One of These Days on new album. At five, my grandfather got me a piano. I played this until I was about fourteen, Mrs Horowitz was my teacher, she was really strict. She would rap the back of my muscles with a ruler when my fist would drop. When my lessons ended, I never played the piano, although I still have it in my home, I won't have it tuned or played!"

"I graduated from college, the same one my son is going to now, we have a legacy thing going on now! Williams College in Massachusetts. I was working as a teacher's aid and my co-workers said you don't know about the Berkshires being in that fancy college. They took me out to a place in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, called La Cocina - Spanish for the Kitchen. There was an open Mic night, a wonderful night. We had a girls night out, we had some libations and someone dared me to sign up and sing. So I signed and sang Mercedes Benz acapella. As I ended my last note, it seemed like there was an inordinate amount of silence and then the place erupted. I was shocked. I thought this town is really music deprived! I won $75 - that's huge compared to what I was earning at the time. The next week, we went back. A month later I had my first paying gig me and a guitarist, we called ourselves The Siblings. From this I started the band Cole Connection - that was an acoustic folk-funk group! We played all over the county. In the summer of 1999, someone reached out to me looking for an African American Gospel singer to sing in a cast for the show A Raisin in The Sun. It was a fantastic show. I was on the show the whole time. When the acts were changing, I was singing. After the first night, I bounded out of the actors' stage door into a mass of people waiting to see the cast, this startled me. I went out and a woman pushed through stating my husband needs to meet you! She brought her husband who happened to be Mandy Patinkin."

"it's a whirlwind. There are so many moving parts"

Gina's love for blues started with a female blues compilation album: "The leading actor, Ruben Santiago- Hudson gave me a CD, Men Are Like Streetcars, of all blues female singers, 1928-1969. I heard many of these tunes but not as a collective. I went back to the Cole Collective and informed them we were going to be a blues band. My bass player now was part of this group then we changed the name to Misty Blues. We performed the collection from that CD, then I started writing. I followed the blues structure when we started but now, I feel the blues is a state of mind."

Having started with piano, I'm curious about the switch to guitar: we talk about guitars and in particular the Cigar Box guitars that she uses. Gina explains: "A dear friend gifted me one, I picked it up, tuned it to open G and within minutes I played and wrote the song To Hear My Call. It was a huge success, we still play this song. It was our first music video. I was taught guitar lessons by Mr Horowitz at the same time I got piano lessons. I stumbled across this other amazing slide cigar-box player on the internet called Justin Johnson and he had an instructional series of how to play this guitar type. When we did Hear My Call, it was mostly thanks to him."

Best advice from Gina to upcoming artists would be: "Know who you are, stay true to yourself, be gracious! My son plays in the band and this encourages a younger audience to see the band. My drummer was my son's drumming instructor in elementary school. My son is like a sponge of knowledge, he can play any instrument. I was always curious at his age as well. I was in a Latin drum corps , we played parades all over the North East. I'm painfully shy, I work on banter on stage. Storytelling is the unveiling of yourself. I find a way to push through that anxiety I have. I also have started a podcast Queens of The Blues with Gina Coleman, I love sharing this and keeping the blues style going."

"I still call us a blues band but heavily influenced by other genres."

So, Gina has written many a good tune but what makes a good blues song. Her take is this: "Something that grabs you and feels familiar, whether in the structure of the music or lyrically. The songs I write talk about the human condition."

Looking ahead, Gina is confident and optimistic: "I am recording another album and three major bucket-list items: First live recorded album, a tribute album to Odetta, and the third, first acoustic album! The BIG thing happening is our UK tour, our first time across the pond."

For more information see www.mistybluesband.com/

AUSTIN WALKIN CANE DAMN FINE BLUES

Colin Campbell Supplied

Blues Matters talked to Austin Walkin' Cane, an old friend, via link to Clarksdale Mississippi during the Juke Joint Festival recently. This was a very laid-back chat, about his newest release, Muscle Shoals, his musical background, influences, and anecdotes about Cleveland blues man Robert Junior Lockwood.

He walked for ten years with a cane due to having a medical condition which he explains here. While performing in New Orleans Bourbon Street, a homeless man called out "Hey Walkin' Cane, got some spare change for a brother?" He took this jibe as a nickname.

"I've been coming to Clarksville for over fifteen years. This year is the 20th Anniversary. It's part of the road life of being a musician. You go someplace, people remember you and reach out. Next thing they are driving you around the city and inviting you to do a house party or have dinner. It's like a second home. I have a group of lovely people, they're in my family whether they like it or not. These families are all around the world where I play. A lot of my touring life is on the road but my bread and butter is playing Cleveland, Ohio. That is what pays my bills. I'm not a real road dog playing every night. I go for about a month… I have two kids who still need me, but they are their own people. I like to think balancing family and being on the road is good," he explains his thinking.

So, does he have a musical background, family stuff, maybe?: " My mom is a singer and seamstress, my dad's an Accountant to trade, but I was the first person in the family generation to play a stringed instrument. I started playing music at fourteen. I was influenced by 60s guitar heroes, Hendrix, Page, Clapton, Robert Cray. I started singing at nineteen. My friend had a gig and asked me to play a jam-night. I said I couldn't sing but he encouraged me. This led to six months of me playing at college. I came home for the summer, and I had a gig where the singer had a tonsillectomy and I said I would sing. Back then I sang like a bird, now it's evolved into how it is now, getting lower. My first blues record was in 1996, that's when I had my leg cut off. I made the decision then went to the studio and thought I'd sell some tunes to have money when I was laid up. It worked! This was the beginning of my blues career, age twenty-four, and I've been plugging away ever since, eight or nine albums mostly original. It took me six months to get me to feel what I wanted to do. Now I'm comfortable playing solo, the musical communication with the people is incredible. You can get into that zone when you forget there are people in front of you. If you do the same thing every night, the spontaneous magic is lost. It takes a long time when you're a musician to learn to make mistakes and learn from them," he answers with a frank honesty.

Austin reflects on how he became a musician: "I was born with a condition arterial venous malformation. By sixteen years old I was using a cane. When I was sixteen, one doctor said I should have my leg amputated, which happened. Going back, when I was fourteen, I formed a band, I played the guitar, my pals played drums and bass. When I missed school at sixteen, I played guitar all day long. I would learn other guitarist's styles. When I started singing, I realised my singing always had a bluesy vibe to it. By fifteen, I was listening to BB King Live At The Regal, Robert Johnson, Charlie Patton, and that got me hooked. My release, Murder Of A Blues Singer was the only one that did any good for my career. I did a year researching online for Agents, magazines. You go down that rabbit hole you find some weird stuff. Then I started getting to festivals and folk sharing my files online! I'm mostly a self-taught guitarist. My style is all bluesy influenced, damn fine blues!"

Playing With Blues Royalty: "Later I got to open for BB King at the King Biscuit Blues festival. I'd met him before. I didn't have long conversations with him. One time when we played in Cleveland, he saw me side stage in my crutches. He said – 'Hey, young man, you take care of yourself; thanks for coming to the show' - I shook hands with him, a great moment."

"Another time I met BB King, Robert Lockwood Junior was with him. He was our link to the blues legends in Cleveland. He was going to play on my record, Murder Of A Blues Singer. But every time I played for him, it was awful, drummer was too loud, bass player was drunk, that sort of thing. The last time he saw me play, he liked one of my songs, a slide piece Love Grown Strong. I saw him in the club watching me play this. He stared at me, we played for an hour and a half and put my guitar down. He looked and motioned me to sit down. He grabs my hand and says, 'Mothafucker, I never saw you work before.' He had a stroke two weeks before we went to the studio, he was a good guy. I try to play in his style, my tribute to him is my version of In the Evening When The Sun Goes Down, the Robert Lockwood tune. I played this in a barn, on the same bill was DC Carnes who played in Mr Lockwood's band for fifteen years. John Hammond Junior was also on the bill. Robert Lockwood was also - but got lost going to this barn. He was salty as hell when he got there eventually! John, opened for Robert. Robert did a version of this tune; I'd never heard him play it. He put his spin on it."

Another Robert Lockwood story then surfaces/: "In 1996, I'd just got my leg amputated. My buddy took me to see Robert Lockwood. I was on crutches. He sees me, and Robert says, where you been and looks down at my leg says' sheeeit' and walked away!"

Now with Hoboville Records, I ask how

this developed: "Last year I signed with this German label. I do a lot of electric and acoustic guitar stuff. I play with a band or solo. The label wanted me to do something, so there were no expectations for somebody who wanted to book me. You get a guy and a guitar! I had recorded an album in 2021 at Muscle Shoals. When Covid hit, I saved money to record at Abbey Road studios in UK and have a six-week tour in Europe, France, Belgium, Germany. These were all cancelled. I kept the money to make the record. Muscle Shoals was only two hours away from where I lived. I emailed Fame recording studios, and I went there on the Wednesday to record." With nothing short of true legendary status, recording his new release Muscle Shoals at the famed studios must have been of particular importance, I suggest:

"The studio is great, seeped in history, Aretha Franklin, all the Solomon Burke tunes were played there, Otis Redding. On the way down to the Fame studio, I started on a song, the last one on the album, Sun Go Down, a song about loss, a heavy song. I sang the song into my phone acapella style at the gas station and sent it to my co-writer Chris Allen. He tweaked the lyric, put chords behind my vocal. I worked on this one until 5am and by 10 I had done take four of the song, it made it onto the record. The majority of songs are slide guitar driven apart from In the Evening. Midnight Creep is Howlin' Wolf, a song about creeping about at midnight. It started with a riff."

"My songs come from all kinds of things, not melodies all the time! Waiting For A Little Sunshine is finger picking style. There was no overdubbing used. I have not made a solo acoustic record for twenty years; it's always been a mix with electric and acoustic songs. There were fifteen songs I recorded for this album in an afternoon. There were covers but I wanted a more original sound to the songs. Thomas Zeigler the owner of Hoboville said put some covers on the album."

The Dylan one, Highway 61, came from seeing a picture of John Hammond laughing when he did the sessions with Bob Dylan for that album. They talked about how incredible it was. When I opened for John, I sang Highway 61! John and his wife melted when I played this. I went to Don Dixon's house (R.E.M producer) and rounded up the album to make it more cohesive. Next thing I know, a great photographer working in Cleveland took some photos, worked it out, now am speaking to you!"

"I made a record in Sun Studios in 2002 in Memphis. I got married there, it was cool, that's how the record got released. Blues everywhere, Graceland, it was incredible. Must tell you a story about Jerry Lee Lewis. He walked up to the piano at Sun studios and started to be the killer doing his thing and smoking a cigarette. Sam Phillips was walking by, and Jerry finished playing, put his cigarette out on the piano on the highest white key, made a burn mark and said, 'Now you know that the Killer was here' and walked out!," he laughs.

Austin is also working a very different project, Ohio City Singers: this is a side project of Austin's associated more with doing Christmas tunes and concerts. He continues: "Chris Allen started this. We had parties, a bunch of friends sitting and rehearsing standards and then we wrote our own; two days before Christmas we recorded them. We would take the lyric sheets to the tunes we wrote and highlight maybe two lines or whatever needed sung by whoever was there. It was like a crowd belting these lines out, we soon did about forty songs. Don Dixon agreed that we had something interesting and original here. It's turned into our Christmas Funkadelic, people dressing up as snowflakes and weird stuff. My kids have grown up with these Christmas songs as much as standards like Silver Bells. We have huge shows but it's only for a month. A labour of love like any music."

Austin's philosophy on success, if he has such a thing, I ask: "I am a happy man and love what I do. I like making forward steps. Being on my own, I can beat myself up but just to better yourself. Keep working hard, so you look like you're being lucky. Ten years being an overnight success, that sort of deal. I'm hoping with this record to be going in a forward direction. Cane's the name; If I was not calling myself Walking Cane, I'd be hobbling on it. It is my own superstition. If I decide to take out the word cane, I would be on the cane all my life! Just going to keep rolling. I got a new leg last week; smoothest I've ever had. I walk great, got a spring in my step!

For further information see website: www.walkincane.com

BLUES IS A HUGE CHURCH

Colin Campbell Ghalia Vauthier

Brought up on the streets of New York City's East Village, bass guitarist Dean Zucchero honed his musical trade on the Manhattan music scene. He is now a songwriter and producer living in New Orleans. Blues Matters caught up with him to discuss his musical career, blues music and of course to discuss his new album entitled Electric Church For The Spiritually Misguided.

Zucchero explains his background in the music succinctly:
"Long before I started playing, I was always fantasised about being a musician. I asked my mother as a kid to buy me drums, she wouldn't oblige. 1979, two friends, one guitarist and drummer were playing. I was mesmerised watching them. They needed a bass player; I said I could play and bought a $35 guitar and amp. I started playing three songs; My Sharona, The Ocean, by Led Zeppelin and Rock and Roll by them also. I didn't look back. I was in a band from '84 to '96. We got signed and had some success, we toured the East Coast College circuit. When the 90's came I was in the city a lot living in East Village. I wanted to be in a blues band. I watched Little Buster and The Soul Brothers from Rhode Island. My first bass guitar teacher was in that band. Towards the end of my career with the band Major Domo, I was more interested in doing pick up gigs with blues bands. That's how I got involved with the blues. 2005 I did a residency in Europe and stayed for nine years! I toured with New York band, The Healers and we had tours of Australia. I moved back to New Orleans in 2013 met some cool people, Cyril Neville, The Mammas Boys and Ghalia Volt. My history in a nutshell!"

So, where does the blues fit in and where does it come from, I ask:
"I played with Popa Chubby in the 90's, did some European tours, also was with Mike Powers, Sweet Georgia Brown, it was a communal scene in New York. I learned a lot. I grew up listening to pop and rock music, Beatles, Elvis, The British Invasion but looked at blues with a rock element. Stylistically my influences are from all over the place. In New York blues style there seems more energy than southern cities like New Orleans. I like to get some multi-cultural touches to my music. New Orleans is a perfect place for a New Yorker to end up being a musician. I am not from a musical family, my cousin played guitar. I learned my stage-craft gigging. In New Orleans you can play all day. When I first came here, I regularly played for fifteen hours a day, I got my gig chops quickly! I was writing and recording as well. Influencers on Bass Guitar playing. I like

culture of American music and they pay money to do it, it is a concert. It makes your music appreciated. A lot of music is taken for granted in America. Local places here are free to get into, so people do not always stay for a whole show. Some Clubs in New Orleans come and go but there are still the likes of Tipatina's. New Orleans is a great place!"

the 60's sounds, Hendrix, Motown, John Paul Jones and John Entwistle are major influences. From a song writing standpoint, I love the Beatles, they changed the music writing process, regarding arrangement and melody. All the blues guys, Muddy Waters and all the Kings, Albert, Freddie, and BB King. Also, rock and roll influences come via Little Richard a bit of everything really!

Blues goes with a lot of styles and makes things interesting and colourful."
And why blues, what does it mean to you, I next say:
"It is the foundation of a lot of American music. Blues is an important part to all music. You can get corny; everyone experiences the blues. It helps us play music a certain way, but it can also be fun and uplifting. It makes me happy. It works well as an ingredient in any style of music. The style evolved in other parts. Alluding to the Church in the title of the album, it's infused in many regions of American music."

"Music is a big part of New Orleans economy. People come to listen to music, eat and general culture. The New York scene dwindled in the 90's because the mayor changed zoning laws. Proprietors were doubling rent. One example was Mannys Car Wash Club. Europe crowds want to experience the

You have a residency in New Orleans, how did that come about?:
"This started during the pandemic. I used to go there, I obviously like beer and went there for the European experience. It feels like a cheap trip to Germany going there! I got to know the owner he had a beer garden and wanted to get some live music. We started playing there regularly, he wanted me to get the music in. So, we started Blues In The Bierhalle three days a week. It was within the guidelines and caught on. It's three hours and I get to play with friends, it's my day gig.

With a debut solo release, how does it feel and what does it mean for you?:
"This is the first time putting an album out with my name on it, all my music with a couple of co-written tunes. Production, arrangement, and bass guitar playing, it is all me. This has been a long time coming! I am not a lead vocalist and reckoned if I was going to make a record, I'll spare the world my singing. I got some of my favourite singers in the region who are creative in their own right. Usually, I record with a band in pre-production then you track, overdubs, vocals and then you mix. Usually, the process takes about ten days. But this record was done in nine months. I wanted to do some demos and sent bass lines into my drummer friend to listen to and he charted it out. We tracked three or four songs. I wanted an early dry warm 70s drum sound and the Engineer Jake Eckert got that. From there I had songs in my head or songs I wanted to do. During the pandemic I had a proliferation of songs and music in my head. Song writing comes from, lyrics, melody, or riffs or how I feel on the day. It can be a line that sings a certain way, I like the rhythmics this way. There are four harmonica players on this record. This was not planned but a few of my favourite singers play harmonica."

"The Electric Church is a play on Hendrix. For The Spiritually Misguided I wanted to go back and do a 70s conceptual album. It also describes New Orleans. Historically all walks of life are here, pirates, prostitutes, slaves, a broad church indeed! Growing up I would buy an album and get consumed in music. It was an experience, not nowadays. It's a journey and hopefully it will stand out. I didn't want this to be a vehicle for soloing and not putting enough time and energy into the lyrics, which sadly some blues players do these days. There are guitar solos, but I wanted this to be about the songs. If this gains traction, I might put a caravan tour together with some of the guys who were part of this record."

For further information see website: deanzucchero.com

BREAKING THE SILENCE

IVY GOLD

Paul David nToyPhotography

This female fronted blues-rock band of veteran players comprising charismatic singer Manou, drummer Tal Bergman (Joe Bonamassa, Billy Idol); guitarist and musical arranger Sebastian Eder (Avalon); bass player Kevin Moore (Jennifer Rush); and keys man Anders Olinder (Glenn Hughes) wear the accumulation of their musical experiences proudly across the eleven tracks on their third, and second studio, album Broken Silence.

martly avoiding the 'second album syndrome' by issuing a live album between this and their debut long player, Ivy Gold has raised the (gold) bar on this new release.

Furthermore, the eagle eyed will have noticed that there is a musician of high note within the Ivy Gold ranks. The well-regarded sticks man Tal Bergman makes his huge musical presence known on this band's recordings as front woman Manou details how she got him involved in the group:

"I just sent Tal an email to introduce myself. Oh, gosh, I remember that was like a 'what the hell are you doing moment'. I mean, if you read his bio, you could get really intimidated. But, I figured, well, I must have been right because he's such a nice guy and he's very down to earth."

This resulted in Ivy Gold's debut album Six DustyWinds. To record this, the intermediate Live At The Jovel and current album release, Broken Silence, Manou and her husband, Sebastian Eder, recruited the remaining group members, as she tells me: "Our old friend is bass player Kevin Moore. We know him as we've done different projects together over the years. So, he was set already. Then we were looking for a keyboard player and I told my friend, Sari Schorr, that I was looking for somebody to come in and play the keys, and she recommended Anders to us from Bristol, UK. That's how we initially put the band together. It's quite an international affair."

However, the Ivy Gold HQ is Manou and. Sebastian based in Munich, Germany, and the ten studio tracks that make up the Broken Silence release, apart from the bonus live song Old Love, were all recorded remotely over a few days. The wonderfully talkative Manou shares the meaning behind the title track: "Broken Silence is about finding truth and the answers to the many questions I have asked myself, especially the last couple of years, " she continues, " As a youngster, I wanted to have a look at the mysteries of life. So, I've been thinking and writing about past experiences. I regret how the many times you just don't speak up for yourself," she says. "The song is talking about breaking the silence and speaking up for yourself, and how important it is to always be true to yourself."

With all the players based across three countries, Manou lifts the lid on how this melting-pot of blues flavours became produced: "We recorded the vocals, the choir and the guitars in Munich. We had Tal on the West Coast of the USA; Kevin is on the East Coast, in New York; and Anders is in England. Tal is always the first one recording the drums; he gets the pre-recording that we do here in Munich. He starts off with the drums, obviously, and then everything else follows. And I'm always the last one when the guys are finished. I put the icing on the cake."

She discloses the emotional toll that writing and recording takes out of her : "The recording sessions this time were sometimes painful," recalls Manou, who is responsible for writing the lyrics. "This is because their content is much more intimate and personal. Writing like this can be very painful. But a powerful warrior like me can take it."

A formidable character, Manou continues to enthuse about Ivy Gold's second studio album: "It turned out quite different than the debut album. It's kind of got more 'oomph' to it. I feel we've grown up a little bit. It sounds mature, stronger as there's more power to it. It's always hard to talk about your own music but that's how I feel about it."

I ask her which artists inform her musical style: "Well, nowadays, Joe Bonamassa is a really big influence. Even though I'm a female singer, I always loved listening not only to his guitar playing, but also his voice. I always thought his voice was so unique. Even though he doesn't have a particularly strong and powerful voice, I feel it's got something to it." She adds: "I do listen a lot to Beth Hart, as well. Also, Sari Schorr as she's very dear to my heart, her music and what she does with her voice. She's incredible."

Interestingly, Manou (real name Manuela) didn't take up singing professionally until well into her thirties: "I still have my normal day to day job, believe it or not, and back then I was listening to music and consuming music, and, at some point, I started playing the guitar and I thought I would take a singing course or singing lessons. That was when I was in my late twenties. That's when I got into it. It became my passion right from the beginning," she continues, "that's when I studied like crazy with many, many different teachers and I participated in lots of different projects, choirs and bands but everything was a hobby for me. I never considered doing any of this professionally until we formed this band over three years ago,"

Manou's observations on the recording process and the lead singer's role reveals the pressure of the front person in a band as she imparts her feelings about her role : "As a private person, I'm actually quite quiet. I'm not somebody that needs to be in the centre of attention." she states, before adding, "But, being an artist and a singer, I feel that's my job and then I love it. I want to give something to the audience. I want to give the audience a nice evening, or just memories or whatever the music opens in them when listening to it. It's not really about me."

I ask this powerful singer from Salzburg what's her favourite performance on this album. The song she is most proud of : "I think it's, I Got What I Need, because I was a little scared before going into the studio as it's a fast song. I don't have that much time to breathe, and the rhythm is very fast, " she says, "and there's a lot of syllables and lines for me to sing in a short amount of time. I'm really proud of it because it turned out nicely and I had to prepare my body for it."

Did practice make perfect, I ask: "I had to practice a lot before I went into the studio to hit the notes, get the rhythm and not think about it. As soon as you think about what you're doing, you're kind of lost. I had to really prepare for that particular song." There's a live bonus song, Old Love, that showcases what Ivy Gold sounds like in concert. I ask Manou if there are any plans to come over and play concerts in the UK :

"We are working very hard on that. We are planning on coming over to the UK. We have a couple of good contacts there and you guys in the press have really been very supportive of us in the UK. So, there are some rumours that maybe it will happen next year. "

In the meantime, Manou and Sebastian will be going out to play as a duo by doing some in-store shows to promote Broken Silence around its late May release. They also have some dates supporting Robert Jon & The Wreck and Marc Broussard on their respective German tours in the summer and autumn before reconvening as a group to play band dates in November. As Manou tells me that this hard blues-rock band name, Ivy Gold, is about being – "strong and branching out in all directions, growing and spreading itself."

I can't help but think that with such a strong album of songs that we will be hearing a lot about this group once they come over to finally play UK dates. With this muscular set of smartly arranged blues-rock songs, Ivy Gold should rapidly rise out of the clubs to be playing larger venues before very long. In the meantime, watch out for this album to break their silence and fill the void with their beguiling approach to the rockier edge of the blues.

DAYTO

FISH

ON

DOUBLE TROUBLE

Adam Kennedy Daniel Sanda

The first-ever collaborative album from Samantha Fish and Jesse Dayton, Death Wish Blues is a body of work born from a shared passion for pushing the limits of blues music.

Produced by the legendary Jon Spencer, the pair's latest offering was recorded at Applehead Recording and Production in Woodstock. The studio resides on a 17-acre farm that once belonged to The Band's Rick Danko.

Whilst Death Wish Blues will be released on the 19th of May, the dynamic duo will follow up with an eagerly anticipated UK tour in October. The pair took their show out on the road across the US last year. "Jesse and I finished out the year, we did some dates together on the West Coast and the East Coast. And then we did our own bands," explains Fish. "I just did a tour with my band in the States and then we went to Australia. We are getting ready to head to Europe and do some dates there. So, I mean, we already hit the ground running with 2023."

But how did the pair come to work together on their adventurous new project? "I've been wanting to do this for the last three years or so. But it's just been something that my manager and I had been talking about loosely," explains Samantha. "When I saw Jesse, it was like, Oh my God, he's the guy. If we were ever to do it - he's the guy."

Samantha adds: "Jesse is no stranger to collaboration. He's got a pretty storied resume. He's collaborated a lot. I've collaborated in the writer's room a whole bunch. Girls with Guitars was the last collaboration I've done as far as a full album and a tour."

Death Wish Blues follows off the back of the Stardust Sessions EP. Although at the time of recording the EP, the pair hadn't contemplated making an album together. "We were totally dipping our toe in the water. I don't think we'd even written any songs. It was nice to be able to do those covers and give ourselves a foundation. Like, let us go be a Garage Band for a little bit before you throw us to the wolves. It was fun," says Jesse. "I remember when Samantha suggested the Townes Van Zandt song, which might be one of her standard songs, but in the circles of Townes, it's not one of the first go-to ones. And when she said that I thought me and this chick are going to hit it off just fine."

Producer extraordinaire Jon Spencer was influential in shaping the sound on the record. "He came in and stripped us away of all the same kind of things that had been going on in the blues genre for a while," says Jesse. "I've been talking about Jon Spencer for many years, just because I'm such a fan of the work that he did with RL Burnside and making these two genres come together in such a way," adds Samantha. "My manager and I had been talking about it for years. So, when the opportunity came about to do this record with Jesse, and we were tossing around these words, Jesse and I kind of had our North Star, so to speak about what we were going for with the genre. And then when Jon came, he was the perfect counterpoint to what we were trying to do. And I knew that he'd help get this vision across because he's really an artist."

Working with Jon Spencer was a truly creative experience for the pair. "I love what he's done in the studio with textures and loops, and interesting instrumentation. He's really into getting these different, unique sounds. But he likes doing things the analogue way. Recording to tape and utilising these old school amps and finding these tones," explains Samantha. "He brought a lot of studio experience into the session, and a very unique perspective."

Recording in Woodstock was a creatively fertile environment for the duo to record their collaborative release. "I thought it was pretty inspiring to wake up every day and go and work in that environment," says Samantha. "Rick Danko used to live on the property right behind the studio. So, you can kind of see where everybody was in proximity to the music that was being made. And it's kind of special because we can only ever really imagine this stuff. So then to be in the environment, it's like, wow, these guys did the stuff that was so important in my life, and they went and made music that was timeless, and it inspires you to go to do it every day. Jesse and I got together when we got there and I think the inspiration hit us, we finished some of our songs there."

Samantha Fish and Jesse Dayton will be embarking on a UK tour together later this year. "We both love the UK. And a lot of that music informed this record or informed these performances," says Jesse. "I'm a total nerd for all that music that came out of the British invasion. I'm a diehard Stones, number one fan, and I love The Clash. And I love all the Britpop stuff. There's just so much stuff there that I think when we get up on stage, they're going to be special shows because we're going to know that we're in a place that's kind of sacred to us."

In terms of how the show will work. Samantha said that: "We have 12 songs on a brand-new album that's coming out. I'm excited about every single song. And then we have three songs from an EP. And then we also put together a show, because we started playing live shows back in December. And so, we put together a show with some of our original material. And some cool covers that we handpicked that we thought would fit the vibe and the parameters of what we're doing. But really this is an intentionally collaborative experience."

Samantha concludes: "We set out to do these songs together, and I'm excited about reimagining this album that we just created for the live stage and finding a way to perform all these songs and tell the story because I mean, that's the story. We were in this studio and made this cool piece of art. So, I think the focus is definitely going to be there. But we'll throw in some of our original material here and there. We've got a lot of time to fill up there. So, we'll be doing a little bit of everything, but a lot of what we did together."

Samantha Fish and Jesse Dayton's album "Death Wish Blues" is released by Rounder Records. Samantha and Jesse tour the UK October 19-28th. Pre-order the album and book tickets at www.samanthafish.com.

ASHLEY SHERLOCK
MORE THAN JUST A NAME

STEVE YOURGLIVCH CHARLOTTE WELLINGS

Ashley Sherlock is a gifted young man who has just embarked on a journey. Anyone who has seen him performing with his energetic band supporting the likes of Kris Barras or Laurence Jones will be in no doubt that the journey will be a long and fruitful one.

The debut album 'Just A Name' is out in June, released on the prestigious Ruf Records label and Ashley is touring across Europe as part of the labels regular Blues Caravan events. There will be extensive UK gigs by Ashley and the band following the album release. Look out for dates.

Manchester based Ashley had played hundreds of shows as a solo artist, honing his skill and learning his trade before putting together his band about four years ago. Charlie Rachael Kay has been ever present on bass, while original drummer Shannon Killarney has given way to former Federal Charm powerhouse Danny Rigg. Early EP and single releases brought to the music to the attention of Thomas Ruf who was quick to offer the support of the label.

I was able to call Ashley in Germany on a rare one-day break in the Blues Caravan tour where he's been wowing audiences alongside Ally Venable and Will Jacobs. He is obviously relishing the experience, 'It's been fantastic so far. Everyone has been so friendly and supportive. It's my first time touring outside of the UK so that's brilliant. Ally is amazing, talented and nice to work with, and Will too, he's originally from Chicago but now lives in Berlin. Sadly, it seems that this time the Blues Caravan won't make it to the UK, there was some talk about it but no dates as yet."

Fans will be able to see Ashley promoting the album release however, he told me, "When I finish the Blues Caravan dates we're supporting Dan Patlansky in Manchester, there are more dates coming up around the release and we have a big show booked at Manchester Academy on September 15th which will be our biggest venue to date. These are exciting times, working with a record label for the first time a quite an experience, a real learning curve. We all feel we're learning so much and I'm gaining a lot by being on the Blues Caravan tour too."

It's quite unusual for a relatively new UK band to be signed by a major European Blues label, I wondered how that came about and how it's working out.

"I knew of Thomas Ruf but didn't really know him. I got a call totally out of the blue from him saying he really liked our music and he'd like us to work with him. Of course we were interested and flattered. We went over to Germany at the headquarters offices and met everybody. He was really nice, obviously knows exactly what he's doing and gave us total creative freedom with the album. We sent him demos of the recordings and he came back saying he loved it."

I had wondered if the album had been recorded before Ruf became interested which is often the case these days,

"No not at all. We had been talking about an album following the good feedback from the live shows, but then Thomas calls and it changes everything. We didn't go off into a big flashy studio, we pretty much recorded it ourselves in Hallam Mills studio in the dead of winter. The thinking behind that was that Thomas had refenced one of our earlier songs and said he loved the vibe of it, so we thought let's stick with what we did. It also meant that we didn't blow any advances on studios etc for record one, we can invest that further down the line. We recorded all the tracks live in big hall type space, we wanted to just keep it simple."

One of the things that stood one for me as soon as I listened to Just A Name was the quality of the production. For a self-produced album, it is outstanding. As for the music itself, it's a modern take on the blues for sure. No shuffles or twelve bar blues but good songs well written and played with feeling. Ashley has cited Marcus King, Gary Clark Jnr. and Jeff Buckley as influences among others and that gives you an idea of the style here. Charlie and Ashley have been together about four years now and after initially stepping in to dep for one gig Danny has stayed for the ride. They have a great dynamic together both live and in the studio almost to a telepathic degree.

I asked Ashley about the song writing side of things.

"I'm the main song writer, I write all of the lyrics and come up with the ideas, but then Charlie and Danny add their harmonies and musical ideas, so we credit things equally. It might be my name on the CD cover but it's everybody's band. The songs aren't pure blues, it's a little bit of rock, a little bit of country and Americana. A melting pot of everything, it's not one specific genre I would say."

My favourite tracks after a few listens are What If I Said To You and Last Call, they both have a sweeping panoramic epic feel about them.

'Thank you. I always feel the most important part of the song is the chorus and those two both start with the chorus. They are different chords but similar. I never try to write songs in a specific way, you must just let it be what it is. Lyrically the songs are just snapshots of my life or written about myself at certain points in time, or for instance, Empty Street was written about myself in the early hours of the morning in the bathroom during lockdown. I don't always like to explain the songs to be honest. It's good to let them be quite ambiguous so people can relate to them for themselves. When we went into the studio, we had between twenty and twenty-five songs and ended up picking the best twelve that fitted together well. One of my favourites is the track Time. It's quite different to the others, a sort of gypsy jazz acoustic thing, I just love it."

One of the things that impresses me about this album is that although Ashley is obviously a gifted guitarist and a great vocalist at no point does he go overboard with solos or riffs. Everything is for the benefit of the song itself. That takes a lot of maturity and self-discipline, especially on a debut release when the urge to show off is so tempting. There is some super musicianship to be enjoyed but it enhances the songs which is as it should be. As Ashley says, 'Yes, that's right. Most often less is more you know. It's not really a guitar album but I feel the song writing is very strong in terms of the storytelling and how I wanted to get everything across."

The first single is Realise, one of the more energetic songs from the album. 'Yes, it's quite punchy. Three minutes or so for radio play. There's a video for that too. The second single will be Dear Elizabeth on May 17th. We think that'll get a lot of attention because of the lyrical content. Realise has been well received, lots of positive feedback which is good as it's different to our previous releases, but we've never wanted to tie ourselves down to just one sound.'

Ashley Sherlock is a young musician with a maturity beyond his years who has produced a modern album devoid of many of the cliches or pitfalls many of his contemporaries fall into.

Ashley Sherlock's debut album "Just A Name" is released by Ruf Records on June 16th and is available from ashleysherlock.com

LEDFOOT
BETTER THAN BAD

Colin Campbell Carl Eek

Ledfoot; born Tim Scott McConnell is a 12-string guitarist who plays with fitted heavy strings, a brass slide, steel fingerpicks and a stomp box. He has been touring and releasing music since the late 70's and written for artists as varied as TNT and Sheena Easton.

Acclaimed singer songwriter his latest release is a second collaboration with Ronni Le Tekro; Limited Edition Lava Lamp. He has also recently brought out another solo re-lease, Coffin Nails. His style is Gothic Blues and Ledfoot is an ongoing project. Recently chatted with him for Blues Matters maga-zine at his home in Norway via technology, it went something like this….

I moved to Norway thirty years ago, three kids worth! I've moved around my whole life. I came over here after the band I was in broke up. I woke up to snow this morning!

Background:

My family is from the South from Tennessee Virginia. I'm trailer trash, I was born in a trailer home. I started playing in bar bands in Florida in 1975. Moved to New York the next year. I adjusted to the \New York scene, Hilly Kristal was my manager for a while, from CBGB Club in New York.

I grew up on country, blues, and music like that. I toured in the States for about ten years, two hundred dates a year. I was in a band called the Rockats a rockabilly rock and roll band, we were on Island records. Then I did a couple of solo records and then had a band called the Havalinas, we toured with Bob Dylan and a whole lot of other bands. I ended up in Norway in 1994 and started making records here. I'm an old school. working class musician.

Becoming a musician

My family was not musical. My Grandfather didn't like singers who sang in a high voice, it was all Johnny Cash, Tennessee Ernie Ford. He sang out of tune! My first instrument was a banjo, I first played that in Wales, when I was about fourteen. I found my home with strings. I'm an introvert and not really a social person. The best place in a bar is on stage. I gravitated towards being a musician I love it, that and being on the road. I enjoy songwritng I've written for lots of artists. It made sense, by the time I was fifteen I had made this choice. My brother played guitar it was the only instrument in the house to tell you the truth! I started playing guitar and other stringed instruments, self-taught.

Twenty years ago, I got tired of standard tuning and started fucking around with the bastard. (He proceeded to show a wall of stringed instruments, his employees!). I tune to the song I'm singing; I use six different tunings. I work on a twelve-string guitar, they're a bitch but I love them. My high E string is 18 or 19 my low E string is about 59 (Guitar guru's take note). It hurts like hell playing it. But you equate that with a normal construction worker…I tune my guitar's low, I want a full response, everything you would get from a band but only doing it myself! I've got the full range.

Going Solo

I got tired of being Poppa in the band. I've

always been a band leader. I thought there must be a way of doing this myself and not showing up to rehearsals…started using my feet for percussion. Found out using open tuning. I could approach things and it was not so familiar to the listener. It gave me a different pallet from other guitar players. I grew up on anything from Revd Gary Davis to Woody Guthrie. I liked that vibe of a single guy howling at the moon.

Song writing Style.

Too many people are too precious about song writing. To me, it's like talking. If I talk to a Banker, I portray myself a different way as I do from a junkie with a knife. To me it's like a conversation, a song. Sometimes someone in a few words can say something in a few words that another takes two hundred! No special mojo to my music.

Coffin Nails album

We did 90% of this in one day. The rest we were getting used to using analogue gear again. When I got over the fact of waiting so long on rewinding it got easier. We burnt reels as it was tape to take. What I fell in love with first with this was being honest with recording the album. We are in a world where it is hard to believe anything you hear. We used one echo and one reverb. I do a take and while listening to it the Engineer would mix it. This is a true documentation of what I do. It's raw, I wanted to make a record where you could just about find out what I had for dinner! The song Better Than Bad, you'll have to ask people who know if I am that!

I tend not to look in the mirror too much so can't tell you. I wanted this to be intimate and honest. I'm sixty-five years old. There's a lot of reflection on this album. A song like I've Never Been, is a metaphoric thing about being at the crossroads. With Ledfoot, I've never taken more than a week to make a record. A lot of the songs were close to being recorded all I had to do was get up on the tight rope and hope I didn't fall. If I did, I fell with style. Runnin' Til I'm Done is traditional blues style. No fucking around, I believe the day you retire is the day you're going down. At some point, if you love your job, it's as much a part of you as breathing, that's what it's about. I'm a workaholic.

Home life

I have a twelve-year-old and fifteen-year-old kid. I never get the work to family ratio right; you are kidding me! Perfect marriage, perfect song that is NEVER going to happen. I just try to keep from falling in the pit as long as you keep swimming!

Origins of the name Ledfoot

I was tired of the music business and politics of keeping a working band working. I wanted to get back to what I loved when I was thirteen sitting with a guitar and feeling I was the cat's meow. I didn't want to interpret it through other people's eyes. I threw out what I knew about guitar and started taking my banjo and slide technique in different ways. My guitars have short lifespans, my strings are so heavy and beat the shit out of them! I work them hard. I wanted to reinterpret myself. I'd been a professional musician for about twenty odd years.

I thought I'd take my shit and not put it all into one particular style, just be myself! I try to describe landscapes and weather. I'm not into music for the social side. I want to be successful but not famous. Success to me is having my kids and being able to work and not stressing over bills.

Working with Ronnie Le Tekro on Limited Edition Lava Lamp

He is a well-known metal guitarist; he doesn't know what I do with a guitar! I lived in his studio for four years. We became close friends. Me with Ledfoot, him with his band TNT are pocketed in a style. Our influences and repertoire are less defined by this. It was a labour of love, we got to dress in our version of drag! There's no rules. When Ronnie wanted to do a song from The Colour Purple, I said that's from a woman-to-woman perspective.

We got together with our bass player who plays black metal style, we have a jazz drummer and a prog rock keyboard player. Our Engineer is heavily influenced by Americana style. That's fun for me because I grew up with that music style and brought my Country influences. We'd love to do some live shows with this band, I love the noise we make together. I love being on the road! Every city has its own personality.

When you get in front of an audience and work hard, they are all the same. A stage is like my living room I don't care how many windows there are I'm still in my living room. You connect with whoever you can look in the eyes with at an event.

Track talk

You Should Know How Hard It Is, My homage to The Band. It came from a news article I read. This couple got married and committed suicide together. I let my mind go with this, the mother, onlookers Police. The irony of it was they didn't get to live to know how hard it is.

Little Rosie: Ronnie had the guitar progression here. I thought about a love song. I wrote the lyrics in fifteen minutes. I lived in New York and Los Angeles for a long time. I used to go and score my dime of pot. I came across different people who wanted to change their lives and I have a dark sense of humour, the melody is a snapshot. I pictured a family on vacation in a convertible and the teenage daughter in the back singing about a guy with a bullet in the back of his head. One vocal take, it was done.

Ego In The Coffin; Ronnie had this riff I loved. I plugged my twelve strings into a Marshall speaker and played slide. He had a friend who he said her ego was so big it wouldn't fit in a coffin, I loved the lyric it was fun to play, Southern rock style.

Never Use Your Eyes; It's a personal song about how most people break on the inside. All the real damage is done on the inside. It's about that struggle. Looking in the mirror! The worst pain is the pain people don't show.

Gothic Blues and beyond

So much in blues music is about that internal struggle. You go out and do your job and the pain inside you never let it show. I love Gothic architecture and what I tried to recreate with my guitar playing was this intricate interesting feel. The old Gothic novels also inspired me. It corelates to traditional blues but the story lines are twisted and intricate. Blues originally was about worry, to do modern blues it's more about angst and stress. I didn't want to be classed in the usual category of blues as such. I felt what I was doing musically and lyrically was close enough, so Gothic came to mind. It's all blues based. It's nothing to do with people's perceptions of Gothic rock. It's like the word gay, before being homosexual in the old sense.

Blues is a catharsis. It's classic, cry and you'll feel better. Rock and roll is about getting rid of aggression and blues is about pent-up emotions that you can't really deal with. There's a joy in getting rid of that feeling. It's like a word like love, it has no meaning at all…I loved murder ballads, Knoxville Girl, Dark Is The Dungeon all that shit. I got into Hendrix and Cream, but I still go back to the old stuff. I was an outcast at School went to about twenty before settling down. It was my Play Station.

We could have talked all day; it was just one of those chats but last words to the Blues Matters readership.

Look for the real thing, that's where you'll find what you're looking for!

For further information see website: ledfoot.bandcamp.com

GERAINT WATKINS

TEAM TAFIA

Iain Patience   Supplied

"All my bloody career I've been a sideman, and lots of people only are aware of me as such…not that I'm complaining, it's paid the bills and helped me raise my family!" So says Welsh accordion and keyboard wizard Geraint Watkins, a guy whose name may indeed be largely under-radar-for many but whose explosive and sensitive sonic work they are likely to have heard many times.

Watkins is one of that extraordinary stable of Welsh musicians who has worked with almost everyone of note in the music world, with wide-ranging musical tastes and styles that roar from rockabilly and soul to blues and Cajun, country and explorative electronica. Always game for a laugh and a challenge, Watkins has worked with the likes of Rory Gallagher, Paul McCartney, Eric Clapton, Roger Daltrey, Tom Jones, John Martyn, The Fabulous Thunderbirds, Nick Lowe, Dave Edmunds, Van Morrison, Mark Knopfler, Carl Perkins and has been a stalwart core-member of Bill Wyman's wonderful Rhythm Kings for many years.

When I raise this remarkable list of greats with him, Watkins simply shrugs expressively, laughs and tells me, "I really don't know why! I mean, I'm not really that good! It surprises me sometimes. I mean, back when I started out, you sort of learned the three-chord trick, went out on the road with rough old bands and three chords, and I still sort of see myself like that, though I know a lot more chords now!"

Watkins is, of course cannily self-deprecating, a man with a humility and humour to match. Now, with his tenth album just released - Aide Memoire, a double disc effort - his career can be viewed in a delightful treasure-trove of over forty tracks featuring his own compositions alongside a few covers; originally a leading founder member of London's highly admired Balham Alligators, the Last Records release includes a few of the numbers the band was loved for.

The Balham Alligators quickly established themselves as a must-see band on the live club and bar circuit in the capital, a position they held onto until splitting up after around fifteen years as a top act. Watkins recalls the time with pleasure: "Those were great times. We were all just learning the business, finding our feet and our way in reality. When

I talk about three chords, that was pretty much how we played back then, that Louisiana sort of push thing. I'd known Gary Rickard since we were students down in Portsmouth, so we drifted back together and the band was my introduction to the business."

Along the way, Watkins teamed up with another Welsh great, Andy Fairweather Low – Clapton's guitarist of choice for over twenty years – and Low produced Watkins' first album, Geraint Watkins and the Dominators for Vertigo, before Watkins went onto work with Shakin' Stevens– you guessed it, another Welshman!

With this unusual but equally noticeable Welsh musician background, I ask Watkins how that all came about in the first place. He roars with laughter and tells me: "Well, you know they do call us the Tafia – the Welsh music Mafia! There's Andy (Fairweather Low), Dave (Edmunds), Shakin' Stevens, Mickey Gee – a great, under-rated guitarist, Henry Spinneti - (another Bill Wyman's Rhythm Kings member) – and we all just love to have fun! Mind you, whoever came up with that name, 'the Tafia,' deserves a bloody medal! It's great!"

"I SAID IT BEFORE, I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHY THEY CHOSE ME"

I remind Watkins of a meeting with George Harrison and an anecdote he once told me a few years ago and again his laughter echoes: "God, I remember that! I felt such a fool later!"

For some time, Watkins toured with Nick Lowe who has said of him, 'He could be filed as the missing link between Paulo Conte and Howlin' Wolf. Again, when I mention this to him, the easy chuckle returns and he says: "I'm not really sure quite what he means by that! Howlin' Wolf! No way can I do that voice!"

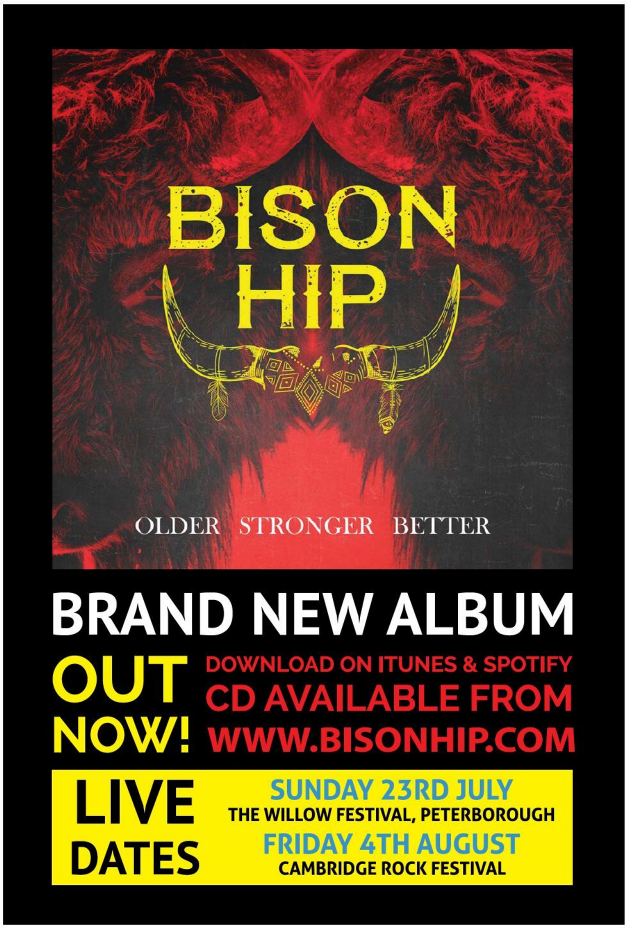
The new album is a genuine good-fun romp from start to finish. Watkins suggests he enjoyed recording it and feels that the final product is very road-ready: "I'm hoping to get out with it later in the year or early next year with my band the Mosquitoes. It's always great to play live. The pandemic caught me completely, knocked me sideways. I'd just recorded my last album, Rush of Blood, in 2019, when Covid hit. That killed off gigs, any hope of promoting the thing and making any real sales! It was a grim time for us all."

Tracks on the new release move effortlessly and enjoyably from Johnny B Goode to Deep in the Heart of Texas, reflecting the myriad influences and styles covered by the guy that Bob Dylan describes thus: "Geraint Watkins is my favourite English piano player.' Watkins himself shrugs off the thought as he tinkles on his keyboard at home saying: "Of course, that's great but I'm not actually English!"

Asked how he works, what comes first the lyric or the melody when writing, the new album is mostly self-penned material, he explains/ "I just work with the piano keyboard for the most part. You know how it goes, you get a theme in your head, it sort of niggles away at you. Then you go back to it again and again, adding, changing, thinking about it and the lyrics just seem to pop-up alongside it, though they tend to take more time and care to put together ultimately."

As we chat about the famous music names he has worked with over the course of the past half-century, Watkins is stubbornly unassuming and modest: "I said it before, I really don't know why they chose me. It's all been great and I never would have imagined or thought for a minute that it could – or would – happen to me. They're all great in their different ways. Sometimes I feel that maybe I'm a sort of imposter in their midst in the studio or on the road. I just do what I can do. There's nothing more to it really. I love working with Bill Wyman and the Rhythm Kings. Bill's just such a lovely guy and a great musician with an incredible background history and grounding in the music. Playing and touring with Bill and the band, always made up with those great players, is always an absolute joy, a true highlight of my musical life, I'd say;"

With time ticking on, I ask Geraint what he hopes for the future, does he have any unfulfilled ambition perhaps?: "I just hope I can go on doing this, what I love. It's hard to explain to people at times that it becomes the 'normal life!' You just get up each day and start again. I know I'm lucky to be doing something I absolutely love and that life could be so much tougher but I just seem to have been lucky each time, fortunate in my musical and personal choices, I suppose, you might say. So all I really want is good health for me and my family and to be able to keep working for as long as I can. I can't see myself ever retiring. I'll probably just drop dead on stage!" His laughter again ricochets around the room, as we say goodbye.



BLUESBONES

BELGIUM'S BEST

Eddy Bronte   Ula Noszczynska & Jak Kok Fotografie

The Bluesbones are a true phenomenon: formed in 2011, the fivesome were voted the public's favourite at the Belgian Blues Challenge the year after, actually winning it in 2016 and ending second at the European Blues Challenge in 2017, topping both the IBBA Blues Charts (UK) and the RMR Blues / Rock Charts (US) on more than one occasion. Their latest offering, 'Unchained', is set to break all their records. How come?

In case you have ever wondered if there is a difference between bluesrock and rock-blues, just pick any track from 'Unchained', the latest album by Belgium's finest: The Bluesbones. Or you can ask the guys themselves, as BM did during an extended informal chat with singer Nico De Cock and pianist, saxophonist and Hammond-ist Edwin Risbourg. Not that it fully solved the question, though!

Nico De Cock: 'Well, we have often tried to describe The Bluesbones sound ourselves and we are never completely satisfied with the result. One thing's for sure, though: we feel equally at ease at a rock or a blues festival. We rock a little extra in front of a rock audience and go bluesier with a blues audience in mind, but in the end there's not that much difference. When chatting after the show, there's often someone coming up to us saying, 'm not really into the blues you know, but…'. We also meet blues musicians who like what we do. We do look at the blues from a wide angle, we're constantly moving from classic rock to trad blues and back and our song-writing reflects that scope. I remember writing a tune and thinking it sounded a bit like Uriah Heep! Not that it was intentional. Anyway, one day we come up with heavy stuff like 'Runaway' and the next writing sessions yields a ballad like 'I Cry'.

Edwin Risbourg: 'The five of us have different tastes, but especially broad tastes - also because we have different musical backgrounds. Nico's background lies in hard rock and he was introduced to the blues via Johnny Winter, I myself am a classically trained pianist who started out as a sax player. Bassist Gert Boeckx has done all kinds of everything and drummer Jens Roelandt equally backs Dutch singer Rick De Leeuw (formerly of Tröckener Kecks) whose repertoire bears no relation to the blues… In fact, only our guitarist Stef Paglia has a blues background as he sort of grew up with Stevie Ray Vaughan. I played the saxophone in a blues band when I was fifteen, but I was also part of a covers band. I don't like being restricted. When attending the Conservatory, my piano teacher once said 'Here comes the pop star' (laughs). I made Bach swing. I can't help it, I need to know what's written there and what I can do with it, I need to feel the music'.

Our guitarist Stef has evolved a lot. That's him on 'Moonshine'. He masters the entire palette of the guitar and when we are writing a song he's very good at picking precisely that part of the palette we need. He may start off with a Pink Floyd-ish, psychedelic bit, insert slide, go acoustic…'.

I follow this thread, saying I hear many songs that are perfect for a classic rock radio station, and I sometimes hear a little prog rock as well. Is there a 1970s influence?

Edwin: 'Certainly not on purpose, but of course the Hammond organ defines a major part of our sound and that may remind you of the seventies and prog rock. At one point in the seventies, many Hammond players went into overdrive, also because of the show bit, people like Rick Wakeman or Keith Emerson … Most blues groups with a Hammond use it as kind of tapestry, but not us. In fact, we've dumped the distortion and put that massive Hammond sound up front! The Hammond allows me to play the blues with a difference. So many blues bands have a piano and you really need to stand out because of the competition. You either have to be very fast or really special. Or a virtuoso'.

Nico: 'When push comes to shove, we really are a live band. We're at our best live. In fact, all our albums but one were recorded live or live-in-the studio. 'Chasing Shadows' from 2018 is the only exception we agreed never to do a real studio album again. It's just not us. That's not the way we play and interact and interaction is a major part of our live success. Live-in-the-studio means we sing and play simultaneously. We do three takes, choose one and send it to a friend in the US who does the mixing and the mastering. He is allowed to fool around a bit, but not much. That's the only production work there is, post-recording. That way, we create a lot of dynamism, like we do on stage. It adds a different dimension. Of course, we don't go into the studio unprepared. There's a structure, but the real chemistry happens during interaction in the studio.

churches in Belgium and we don't exactly have endless motorways. One would have to try very hard not to be rescued within two hours!

Nico: 'Well, we have all seen these road movies, haven't we? It's just my fantasy at work. I imagine myself on Route 66 on my way to a gig, the car breaks down and there's no-one to be seen, while waiting for help I get out my guitar and play. It often starts with just one phrase and I then try to weave a story around it, good lyrics need a story, a message too. And Edwin's fantasy is even bigger than mine!'

Edwin: 'For 'The Road Ahead' I had the music and I was wondering what lyrics would fit and I imagined myself driving on an endless highway heading towards a new life. Part of that process is unconscious, and as Nico said another part is based on what you know, what you have experienced. The writing process of 'Talking to the Lord' differs: I was tinkling on the piano and there was this boogie in my head. Nico's lyrics were there and I had the impression they would do the job. I wrote a riff and a melody and submitted the result to the group. I don't think Nico had a boogie in mind when he wrote the words for 'Talking to the Lord'!'

Nico: 'Quite right! I have these lyrics lying around and I give them to Edwin or someone else, thinking maybe they can work something out. The trouble is I usually know how the song-to-be should sound like, but then Edwin turns it inside out and I'm not entirely satisfied. I find it difficult to let go, but then again I'm uncapable of creating something else, so …'

With such a genuinely great album just out, I next ask them to comment on a couple of songs from 'Unchained:'

Edwin: ''Chain Gang' is a work song about prisoners that build a railroad and when it's finished the train starts rolling and goes faster and faster, and the song too goes faster and faster. Eventually, you feel like stamping your feet and dancing to it. We make sure people do so when we play it live by stretching the song. There's a message too: the train built by prisoners will reach its destination, but what about the builders? When the US abolished slavery the railroad builders no longer had cheap labour, so black people that had been set free were now sent to jail for next to nothing, a petty theft or such, and became cheap labour again."

Nico: 'Taking to the Lord' is a road song, with a greasy, rootsy guitar solo by Stef. By the way, the text is very critical of a church that forgives your sins in return for a donation. I'm sure it won't be too popular in America, as many people are still very religious and do donate to tv priests. Then there's the ballad 'I Cry'. I already explained I heard something else in my head when I had the lyrics, but the group re-wrote it to great effect. It's a song about loss, any type of loss actually, the listener can fill it in for himself."

Nico adds a tantalizing closing thought: "I think these three songs reflect our sound quite well, and that brings us back your initial question about the Bluesbones sound. Let me tell you a little secret: we have actually discussed changing the name of the band and leaving out the blues reference, but then again …"

More information can be found here: www.thebluesbones.com

Edwin: 'You can't record or perform properly without a structure, but we rehearse very little as such because we play live an awful lot and because we have these writing sessions. The set-list consists mostly of originals written by ourselves. We actually sit together to write songs and we all bring our ideas to these sessions. Usually, a riff comes first, say Stef comes up with this riff on his acoustic guitar and I will add something with the Hammond that is complimentary, which creates a new interaction, and so on. There are many ways to start composing, but the process remains the same'.

BM: To my surprise, 'Unchained' also features a 'symphonic' version of that tear-jerking ballad 'I Cry'. That doesn't sound like rock.

Nico: 'Well, most hard rockers bring ballads and you know what? The ballads are their greatest hits! Stairway to Heaven, Child in Time… And on Spotify, our ballads like 'I Cry' or 'Voodoo Guitar' score a lot better than the up-tempo songs! Anyway. When I wrote the lyrics to 'I Cry', I had the music in my head, but the band created something different out of it and I went grrrr. I kept hearing it with orchestration and as we allow our mixer-producer to fool around a bit with one song on each cd, we thought 'I Cry' would be something for him to play with and that's how this symphonic version came about'.

BM: I've noticed that many of your lyrics are about archetypal blues themes, such as broken-down cars along a godforsaken highway, the Baptist church, the devil, bad women. There aren't exactly many Baptist

CALIFORNIA MEETS CHICAGO AND EVERYWHERE IN-BETWEEN

ALASTAIR GREENE

Stephen Harrison Roman Sobus

Alastair Greene was born in Santa Barbara, California in 1971, releasing his first album, A Little Wiser, in 2001. Since then he has released another nine albums, culminating in the live album, Alive In The New World. A dedicated disciple of blues and blues/rock, his influences leave you in no doubt as to where his true passions lie. B. B. King, Buddy Guy, The Allman Brothers, and Stevie Ray Vaughan to name but a few. We chat via Zoom about his love of Gibson guitars and everything in between while he is in the middle of an American tour with his close associates, Tab Benoit, and Corey Dupelchin.

"I literally set my alarm half an hour ago to get ready for this chat, It's 9.00 am here in Biloxi, Mississippi. I'm out on tour opening for Tab Benoit for three weeks, we've just finished the first week of the tour and got a couple of days off before we head out to Birmingham, Alabama"

This tour, like the last couple of tours, sees Alastair going out with Tab and Corey; Alastair opens the set as a solo artist, Then Tab plays, then Alastair joins them for a few tunes on guitar. It's a solo gig and a trio all wrapped together. They have been playing together for many years, as well as playing on each other's albums, so it's a tight-knit set of musicians.

"When I go on tour with Tab, he produces the studio records and plays drums on it, one of the business models for Whiskey Bayou Records is that I as the artist, jump on his tour bus and he plays drums for my set, so it's a cool thing when we can make the stars align and make these things happen"

The last time that I chatted with Alastair, he had just released his album The New World Blues which was also produced by Tab Benoit. It's a great album, a great mixture of blues and blues/rock, as we have come to expect from him over the years.

"In 2021, we started touring the record and it was kind of early on in the process, we ended up playing five nights in a row at one place where we recorded the shows. That helps to set yourself up for success, playing the same venue five nights in a row. I had always wanted a kind of residency somewhere, so it was a perfect situation, the perfect size room, and we sold out all five nights, so everything worked out great for us at the City Winery in Chicago."

City Winery is a chain of restaurants and live music venues throughout America. They are passionate about wine, and live music. This for me would seem like a perfect location to see someone like Alastair Greene, or any blues artist for that matter. The original building in Chicago was a food distribution warehouse dating back to 1911. As we all know, Chicago has become almost the cultural center of blues music

since the early 1940s. Nowadays it offers Italian, French, Spanish, and Middle Eastern cuisine alongside its many fine wines. To be able to record a live album in these surroundings over a five-night stint must have been so good for the band.

"I hadn't played that venue before, there are a lot of venues in Chicago, but this was my first time there. It's situated in downtown Chicago and is part of a chain. It is a really well-run venue, they have a great sound system in there. They treated us very well and it was right across the street from a famous Pizza Parlour, so one afternoon me and Corey got ourselves a proper deep-crust Chicago pizza. The benefits of being in one place for a few nights are you get comfortable with your surroundings, comfortable with the staff, it all helps the show to flow. I got the chance to walk around Chicago a little bit during the day, I got to hang out with Dick Sherman who is a blues producer and historian, and he gave me a tour around where a lot of the blues legends of Chicago used to live. It was a great experience for me."

Being able to just walk around the city of Chicago is one of life's major pleasures, as he mentioned, the blues artists that have come and gone over the decades make Chicago what it is today, the culture, the food, the architecture, and of course the history of electric blues which Chicago helped to shape. It happens to be one of my all-time favourite places that I have been lucky to enough to spend some time in.

"When we set about the recording of the live album, we wanted it to represent how we feel and how much we enjoy playing together, we wanted it to be a lot of fun, and I think that we achieved that. Tab is known as a fantastic guitarist and singer-songwriter, but he's also a phenomenal drummer, we always have a great time on stage. I'm coming over to the UK in May to tour and open up for Walter Trout for a couple of weeks, but this will just be me on my own and probably joining Walter on guitar for a couple of songs. I've hardly played in the UK even though I played with Alan Parsons, I think we only played in the UK once in about seven years, so I'm really excited about this trip."

After the huge success of his last studio album, I was keen to know when Alastair was going to be back in recording mode for another album.

"Well, I'm always writing, my plan is to get some material together, but it's hard to predict when things are going to happen. Ideally, I would like to have a studio record out sometime next year, if at all possible. I haven't done as much collaborating on the writing as I would have liked to have done, so that would be a more adventurous thing for me to be doing."

Last time I spoke to Alastair, the world was trying to get back to some kind of normality following the covid outbreak. Things were tough all across the board for artists, especially in a live setting. Venues are getting back to some kind of normality, but the impact of the pandemic has hit all live venues very hard, and some, unfortunately, have not survived, which means fewer places to play, and also the venues have taken huge hits financially. This is just as acute a problem over the water in America.

"I think it depends on where you were in your career when covid hit. I would say a lot of the bigger acts weren't as affected by covid because they are still going to be selling tickets, the money might change a little bit, but if you weren't selling out big places, unfortunately, some of the smaller places on the blues circuit closed. So, ultimately there are fewer and fewer places to play because so many places lost money.
The promoters are somewhat gun-shy as far as guarantees for bands that haven't been through that part of the world. Bands and promoters are hesitant and unsure of their following, so they are not as prepared to take as many risks. People too, depending on their financial situation is, maybe they want to see bigger artists, or go to a festival and have the chance to see more bands for their money at the one time. Things have definitely changed since covid, there has been a shift, and not for the better. I'm lucky enough to get a hand full of festivals that I've done, I usually get a few a year. I've got a couple of festivals coming up later this year, and I've got a bike rally in the middle of Colorado, and I'm headlining a Saturday night gig at a festival in Ohio in July."

"IT'S HARD TO PREDICT WHEN THINGS ARE GOING TO HAPPEN"

Whenever I chat with someone who is primarily a guitarist as well as a singer, I'm always interested in their guitar collection, do they have a particular favourite guitar? One that is used more than others, especially for tone and performance both in the studio and live. I love how guitarists have a special passion for each guitar that they own.

"Well, you know, that's a really good question. Over the years, I've kind of gravitated toward a couple of guitars. I think for the last decade I've been associated with a Gibson Les Paul. I've leaned a lot more toward Gibson guitars, although I've had a couple of Fender Stratocasters over the years, but for the most part, I've been using Gibsons. I bought a Les Paul in 2012 that I pretty much use exclusively, which is the guitar on the cover of the live album. Recently I have been trying out a couple of Gibson Firebirds, which is my sort of tip of the hat to Johnny Winter. They are fun to play, so I've taken them out with my Les Paul. For me, it's kind of interesting for me to have different guitars in my rotation, because some of them inspire me, I'll set one up to play slide. I also have a Gibson 335 and an SG. Each guitar has a unique characteristic that helps bring out certain things in you. There is a part of me that wishes I had found that one guitar like Rory Gallagher had that he basically used throughout his whole career, you hardly ever saw him with anything else."

We start to wind up the chat about everything Gibson and the special place they hold in the career of Alastair, but I couldn't help but mention that I'd recently seen him post a photo on Facebook with him and Eric Clapton.

"That's coming up on ten years ago, no, it's over ten years ago, I think it was 2011 or 2012. I'm still a guitar geek and as far as playing blues and blues/rock, he's still one of the cornerstones. I was playing a gig with Alan Parsons, Eric was playing the next night at the MGM Grand Casino. Los Lobos was opening for him and at the time a friend of mine was playing drums for Los Lobos. I called him up and asked if he could get me a couple of passes, which he very kindly did, and went backstage, Eric was sort of mingling around, then they had dinner, so I didn't want to interrupt him at dinner, and I thought, if I have a chance to meet him then fine if I don't I don't. then as we were walking down the corridor, Eric came toward us, so I just said hi my name is Alastair, I play guitar with Alan Parsons, and Clapton said that's great, but at the time, I was playing an Eric Clapton signature Fender Stratocaster guitar, and he was like, so do you like that particular guitar? When I suddenly realized I was alone in the corridor with Eric Clapton talking about the guitar that I was using. I didn't want to overstay my welcome so I thanked him for the chat and quit while I was ahead."

This was a perfect way to say our goodbyes, it was a wonderful catch-up with a great blues/rock artist. I look forward to chatting with Alastair Greene soon, and hopefully catching him on the road with Walter Trout.

LIVE MUSIC

THE CINELLI BROTHERS

08 JUL	BUCK MOON BLUES FESTIVAL	EAST MOLESEY
20 JUL	THE EEL PIE CLUB	TWICKENHAM
26 SEP	TEVIOT ROW HOUSE	EDINBURGH
07 OCT	THE MUSICIAN	LEICESTER
14 OCT	BOURNEFEST 2023	SITTINGBOURNE
11 NOV	THE CLUNY	NEWCASTLE
12 NOV	BLUES RHYTHM AND ROCK	WHITBY
16 NOV	TEMPERANCE	LEAMINGTON SPA
23 NOV	SALTBURN BLUES CLUB	NEW MARSKE
24 NOV	BLUES AT THE BAY	STOCKTON-ON-TEES
03 DEC	LOOE BLUES FESTIVAL	LOOE,

BONNIE RAITT

03 JUN	LONDON PALLADIUM	LONDON
06 JUN	BOURNEMOUTH PAVILION	BOURNEMOUTH
07 JUN	OXFORD NEW THEATRE	OXFORD
09 JUN	GATESHEAD SAGE	GATESHEAD
11 JUN	ROYAL CONCERT HALL	GLASGOW
14 JUN	BRIDGEWATER HALL	MANCHESTER
15 JUN	SYMPHONY HALL	BIRMINGHAM

JOOLS HOLLAND

16 JUN	BELFAST WATERFRONT	BELFAST

ALBERT LEE

12 OCT	BACKSTAGE @ GREEN HOTEL	KINROSS
15 OCT	BACKSTAGE @ GREEN HOTEL	KINROSS
20 OCT	CHELMSFORD SOCIAL CLUB	CHELMSFORD

SAMANTHA FISH & JESSE DAYTON

19 OCT	THE FIRE STATION	SUNDERLAND
20 OCT	BARROWLANDS	GLASGOW
21 OCT	O2 RITZ	MANCHESTER
22 OCT	SWX	BRISTOL
24 OCT	BARBICAN	YORK
25 OCT	JUNCTION	CAMBRIDGE
26 OCT	O2 ACADEMY	BOURNEMOUTH
27 OCT	DE LA WARR PAVILION	BEXHILL
28 OCT	O2 INSTITUTE	BIRMINGHAM

ROBERT CRAY

09 JUN	INDIGO2	LONDON
10 JUN	TOWN HALL	BIRMINGHAM
11 JUN	OLYMPIA	LIVERPOOL
12 JUN	QUEENS HALL	EDINBURGH
15 JUN	MANDELA HALL	BELFAST

EMMA WILSON BAND

02 JUN	TEMPERANCE	LEAMINGTON
23 JUN	VOODOO ROOMS	EDINBURGH
23 JUL	UPTON BLUES FESTIVAL	UPTON

FANTASTIC NEGRITO

01 JUN	THE FLEECE	BRISTOL
03 JUN	EUSTON HALL	EUSTON
05 JUN	ST LUKE'S	GLASGOW

REV PEYTON'S BIG DAMN BAND

12 AUG	OSLO HACKNEY	LONDON
13 AUG	NORWICH ARTS CENTRE	NORWICH
14 AUG	THE CLUNY	NEWCASTLE
15 AUG	GREYSTONES	SHEFFIELD
16 AUG	NIGHT N DAY	MANCHESTER
18 AUG	BRUDENELL SOCIAL CLUB	LEEDS
19 AUG	THE BULLINGDON	OXFORD

THE COLD STARES

12 AUG	OSLO	HACKNEY
19 AUG	BOURNE MUSIC CLUB	SITTINGBOURNE
20 AUG	THE 1865	SOUTHAMPTON
21 AUG	O2 ACADEMY2 ISLINGTON	SOUTHAMPTON
23 AUG	MAID OF STONE FESTIVAL	MAIDSTONE

THE CADILLAC KINGS

02 JUN	THE BEAR CLUB	LUTON
17 JUN	THE RIVOLI BALLROOM	LONDON
18 JUL	BLETCHLEY BLUES CLUB	BLETCHLEY
28 JUL	LANDMARK ARTS CENTRE	TEDDINGTON
13 AUG	IPSWICH JAZZ & BLUES CLUB	IPSWICH
20 AUG	THE BLUES TRAIN CONCERTS	LONDON
02 SEP	DISEWORTH BLUES CLUB	DISEWORTH
15 SEP	MARIGOLDS BLUES CLUB	HARLOW
16 SEP	THE SOUND LOUNGE	SUTTON
25 OCT	VENUES	TBC
11 NOV	TENBY BLUES FESTIVAL	WALES
18 NOV	BOOGALOO JUMP JIVE	BOURNEMOUTH
01 DEC	BOOGALOO BLUES WEEKEND	BOURNEMOUTH
02 DEC	BOOGALOO BLUES WEEKEND	BOURNEMOUTH
16 DEC	TEMPERANCE	LEAMINGTON SPA
19 JAN	SAWBRIDGEWORTH JAZZ & BLUES	SAWBRIDGEWORTH

DOM MARTIN

09 JUN	THE BAYSHILL INN	CHELTENHAM
10 JUN	LIVES OF COLOUR CULTURE FEST	PRESTBURY
11 JUN	COOLHAM LIVE MUSIC CLUB	COOLHAM
30 JUN	ALFOLD ROCK AND BLUES FEST	CRANLEIGH
01 JUL	THE GREYSTONES	SHEFFIELD
02 JUL	THE IRISH CENTRE	LEEDS
03 JUL	THE HUG AND PINT	GLASGOW,
05 JUL	THE HARE AND HOUNDS	BIRMINGHAM
07 JUL	THE BEAR CLUB	LUTON
08 JUL	BUCK MOON BLUES FESTIVAL	EAST MOLESEY
15 JUL	PLAYING WITH FIRE 2023 OMAHA, NE	
25 AUG	GB RHYTHM AND BLUES FESTIVAL	COLNE
28 AUG	BARNOLDSWICK MUSIC & ARTS	BARNOLDSWICK
08 OCT	CARLISLE BLUES ROCK FESTIVAL	CARLISLE
09 OCT	CLUNY	NEWCASTLE
10 OCT	POYNTON WORKMEN'S CLUB	POYNTON

SARI SCHORR

25 OCT	THE CRESCENT COMMUNITY VENUE	YORK
26 OCT	ORAN MOR	GLASGOW
27 OCT	OLD FIRE STATION	CARLISLE
28 OCT	THE BIRDWELL VENUE	BARNSLEY
29 OCT	FOXLOWE ARTS CENTRE	LEEK
31 OCT	ARLINGTON ARTS CENTRE	NEWBURY
01 NOV	GARAG	LONDON
02 NOV	GLOUCESTER GUILDHALL	GLOUCESTER
03 NOV	THE CASTLE & FALCON	BIRMINGHAM
04 NOV	DOCKS ACADEMY	GRIMSBY

PHILIP SAYCE & TROY REDFERN

19 NOV	THE FLEECE	BRISTOL
20 NOV	BAND ON THE WALL	MANCHESTER
21 NOV	THE CLUNY	NEWCASTLE
23 NOV	ÒRAN MÓR	GLASGOW
24 NOV	BRUDENELL SOCIAL CLUB	LEEDS
25 NOV	THE GARAGE	LONDON

LAURENCE JONES

02 JUN	RORY GALLAGHER FESTIVAL	IRELAND
30 JUN	ALFORD ROCK & BLUES FESTIVAL	UK
01 JUL	LINTON FESTIVAL	UK
07 JUL	BURES MUSIC FESTIVAL	UK
05 AUG	BUXTON BLUES FESTIVAL	MATLOCK UK
06 AUG	CAMBRIDGE ROCK FESTIVAL	UK
23 SEP	NWOCR LIVE FESTIVAL - KK'S	WOLVERHAMPTON
06 OCT	FROME - CHEESE & GRAIN	UK
16 NOV	P60	AMSTELVEEN
01 DEC	PLANET ROCKSTOCK FESTIVAL	UK

ALL INFORMATION CORRECT AT THE TIME OF GOING TO PRINT. PLEASE CHECK WITH THE VENUES BEFORE TRAVELLING OR BOOKING HOTELS

RMR TOP 50

ROOTS MUSIC REPORT'S BLUES ALBUM CHART

POS	ARTIST	ALBUM	LABEL
1	THE CASH BOX KINGS	OSCAR'S MOTEL	ALLIGATOR
2	JOE LOUIS WALKER	WEIGHT OF THE WORLD	FORTY BELOW
3	MIKE ZITO & ALBERT CASTIGLIA	BLOOD BROTHERS	GULF COAST
4	ALLY VENABLE BAND	REAL GONE	RUF
5	EDDIE 9V	CAPRICORN	RUF
6	SISTER LUCILLE	TELL THE WORLD	BLUE HEART
7	BIG HARP GEORGE	CUT MY SPIRIT LOOSE	BLUES MOUNTAIN
8	ERIC BIBB	RIDIN'	STONY PLAIN
9	BUDDY GUY	THE BLUES DON'T LIE	RCA
10	SKYLAR ROGERS	AMONG THE INSANITY	BLUE HEART
11	JOHN PRIMER	TEARDROPS FOR MAGIC SLIM	BLUE HOUSE
12	THE GAYLE HARROD BAND	TEMPTATION	NIGHTINGAYLE
13	JEFF PITCHELL	PLAYIN' WITH MY FRIENDS	DEGUELLO
14	RHYTHM KREWE	UNFINISHED BUSINESS	RHOMBUS
15	TAS CRU	RIFFIN' THE BLUE	SUBCAT
16	NICK SCHNEBELEN BAND	WHAT KEY IS TROUBLE IN?	VIZZTONE
17	MISTY BLUES	OUTSIDE THE LINES	GUITAR ONE
18	TAJ MAHAL	SAVOY	STONY PLAIN
19	DEB CALLAHAN	BACKBONE	BLUE PEARL
20	DAMON FOWLER	LIVE AT THE PALLADIUM	LANDSLIDE
21	ALABAMA MIKE	STUFF I'VE BEEN THROUGH	LITTLE VILLAGE
22	THE MAPLE BLUES BAND	LET'S GO	CORDOVA BAY
23	DANNY LISTON	EVERYBODY	BLUE HOUSE
24	MISSISSIPPI MACDONALD	HEAVY STATE LOVING BLUES	ANOTHER PLANET
25	TONY HOLIDAY	MOTEL MISSISSIPPI	FORTY BELOW
26	BARBARA BLUE	FROM THE SHOALS	BIG BLUE
27	WALK THAT WALK	BIG WORLD OF TROUBLE	SELF-RELEASE
28	TERESA JAMES	WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM HER FRIENDS	BLUE HEART
29	BRUCE KATZ BAND	CONNECTIONS	DANCING ROOSTER
30	JIMI "PRIME TIME" SMITH & BOB CORRITORE	THE WORLD IN A JUG	VIZZTONE
31	MUD MORGANFIELD	PORTRAIT	DELMARK
32	BIG SHOES	FRESH TRACKS	QUALIFIED
33	JOE KROWN	TRIBUTE	SLEDGEHAMMER
34	MATT ANDERSEN	THE BIG BOTTLE OF JOY	SONIC
35	DYER DAVIS	DOG BITES BACK	WILDROOTS
36	JOHNNY KING & FRIENDS	CALL IT CONFUSION	SOL ISLAND
37	JIMMIE BRATCHER	FAR ENOUGH	AIN'T SKEERT TUNES
38	JENNIFER LYN & THE GROOVE REVIVAL	GYPSY SOUL	J&R COLLECTIVE
39	THE BLUESBONES	UNCHAINED	DONOR
40	SCOTT ELLISON	ZERO - 2 - SIXTY	LIBERATION HALL
41	DUDLEY TAFT	GUITAR KINGDOM	SELF-RELEASE
42	SUNNY BLEAU AND THE MOONS	SLOW BURN	COCCOMUSIC
43	DOUGLAS AVERY	TAKE MY RIDER	GREENWAVE
44	ANGELA STREHLI	ACE OF BLUES	NEW WEST
45	BOB CORRITORE	WOMEN IN BLUES SHOWCASE	VIZZTONE
46	BACKTRACK BLUES BAND	A DAY BY THE BAY	GULF COAST
47	MARC BROUSSARD	S.O.S. 4: BLUES FOR YOUR SOUL	KEEPING THE BLUES ALIVE
48	ANA POPOVIC	POWER	ARTISTXCLUSIVE
49	BRAD "GUITAR" WILSON	LOVERS BEFORE SUNRISE	CALI BEE
50	DEUCE 'N A QUARTER	KEEP MOVING ON	225 ENTERTAINMENT

HENRIK FRE

Adam Kennedy Timo Wilke

EISCHLADER

Henrik Freischlader returned to our British shores in May for an extensive UK run titled the Bring Back The Time Tour. The artist is presently touring in support of his new album 'Henrik Freischlader recorded by Martin Meinschafer II'.

With the pandemic curtailing the ability to tour, hitting the road is a feeling that has been most welcomed by the bluesman. Having performed in his native Germany at the start of the year, the artist has been overwhelmed by the response he has received thus far in 2023. "For us, it was the most important thing to just be back on stage, no matter what. And we were kind of surprised that at the very end of the tour, many people showed up, and we had sold out shows again. It was even better than before Corona," confirms Henrik. "I think it's also because we are back to playing blues rock, and we have a new band, and it feels very good to play with these guys who I've known for quite a long time now. But also, the audience and the people seem to be very hungry. And you could feel that they missed something very important to them. And that was live music and the feeling of being together."

Being off stage during the pandemic was an unusual feeling for the multi-instrumentalist. "When it started, in the first place, it just felt strange to not be able to be on tour anymore," he says. "I made the best out of it. I cleaned the basement, and got rid of some stuff, and sold some stuff on eBay to keep it going. There was a long time for the things you don't have the time for usually. So that was a good thing about it for me. And, of course, I was always expecting live music to return."

With time on his hands the artist turned his hands to activities outside of music. "I didn't play a lot of guitar, and I didn't write songs or lyrics. I really used that time to do other stuff. Which is normally not possible when you are a musician and always on the road and recording one album after the other. So that was very nice to not be a musician," said Henrik. "In the very end, I couldn't help but start again. Then I thought because my old band split up because of the pandemic because there were no shows or no rehearsals, and then you don't really have contact anymore. Sad as it is, I decided to go back to this. Then I recorded two albums, one from me and one as the producer of Canadian singer Layla Zoe, and that felt really good."

The artist's latest release saw Henrik Freischlader reunite with Martin Meinschafer. For his latest offering, Henrik played a multitude of instruments on the release. "When I recorded the first part of this album in 2009, it was just me and Martin in the studio. I played all the instruments, and he recorded them. Because of the situation with the pandemic, and the band split, I was alone again. So, I went in the studio and recorded everything myself again," explains Henrik. "So, I played the drums, bass, guitar, and vocals. But then I called my old buddy, Mortiz Fuhrhop, on Hammond organ. And he joined me for those two albums in the studio. Because the Hammond parts were the hardest thing in 2009."

Playing the role of a multi-instrumentalist is something that Henrik enjoys a lot. "I like it very much, I have to say. I once did it when I was very young, 16 in my first rehearsal room, but with an old tape machine. And that's why I did it in a more professional way in 2009, for the first time in the real studio," he says. "I enjoy it very much to just not talk about music, but just play the music and know what I have to play to make it work for the other instruments."

One thing missing from recording this vast array of instruments was the camaraderie of his bandmates. "You are alone all the time, and you don't have someone you can talk to all the time. Martin, of course, but only during the daytime," he says. "It used to be always nice to have bandmates around with who you could plan the next day with, for example, but I enjoyed it very much."

Working with Martin again has allowed the artist to explore sound and recording techniques that he loves. "Martin uses old microphones. And he's more the analogue guy," explains Henrik. "For me, as a musician, it's very important to hear the natural sounds of the instruments to get motivated while playing. And I like his sound very much. The drum sound and the low bass sound; it's old school. And, of course, the guitar sound, which is very airy. If you hear the guitar coming out of the room and not with the mic directly in front of the speaker. I just love the sound that he does. And it's very inspiring. The music couldn't be how it is if it was not for him as well."

The sound on Henrik's latest offering has a live feel to it. "I think it's always more interesting to really hear the rough side of music as well. Especially these days when everything is very clean, and in my opinion, a bit overproduced, and you don't really know if it's being played or if it's a machine. So, I like the live sound very much. And, with all the little mistakes in it. Just leave it on tape, and it will be fine. It makes the music, I think."

Aside from his music, Henrik has recently been producing Layla Zoe. Working as a producer is something that the artist enjoys immensely. "I like it very much," he confirms. "I always like to find out what can be done somehow. Because if you have a great artist like Layla Zoe, your job is more to listen to what could be done. Then for me in the first place, it's also about the songwriting and giving her good songs so she can shine with her vocals. I would say that is my job, and then she sings, and then the album is ready."

Henrik concludes by explaining that touring is very much on the agenda for the remainder of the year. "We will go on tour again here in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, Netherlands, and Belgium in autumn, and then we might start a bit earlier to rest this year because it was very cold at the end of last year. And it was not so good for our tour bus. So maybe in the middle of November, I would say we will prepare for Christmas."

'Henrik Freischlader recorded by Martin Meinschafer II' is out now.

JERRY DOUGLAS

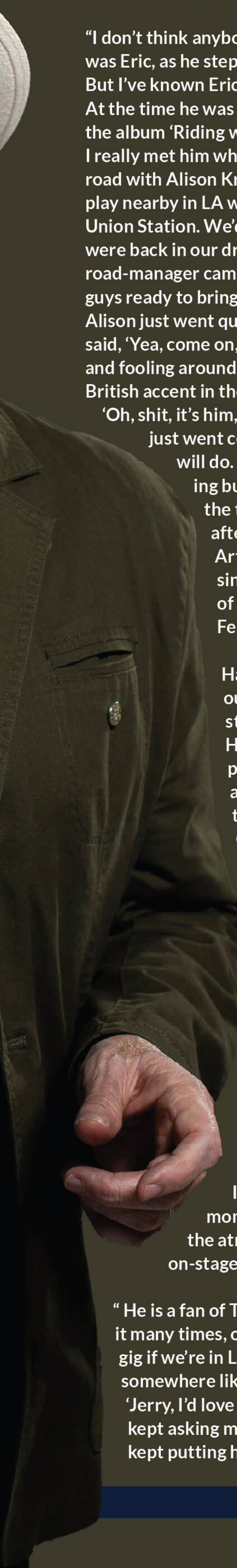
SLIDING WITH SLOWHAND

Iain Patience Patrick Sheehan

Catching up again with Jerry Douglas, undoubtedly the greatest Dobro player ever to have put his hand to the instrument, is always a wonderful, fun-filled journey. Jerry is game for any kind of music that takes his fancy. An indisputable bluegrass and Americana legend, he tells me he is planning a project playing alongside Miles Davis' old buddy, jazz and blues guitar giant John McLaughlin – a thought that truly excites and bewilders simultaneously.

Jerry laughs at the very thought of such an imponderable and unexpected combination: "I'm really looking forward to it, to play with John. It's gonna be real interesting, a true challenge. Who knows how it will work out. But I'm always prepared to try anything musically!"

In January at London's Festival Hall, he kicked off the second half of the Transatlantic Sessions tour gig playing 'While My Guitar Gently



Weeps' on Dobro. A few bars in, he stopped and said 'Let me bring on the guy who actually taught me how to play this song, Mister Eric Clapton.' The packed hall fell silent in disbelief at this unexpected and unbilled addition to the tremendous line-up onstage.

"I don't think anybody believed me, that it was Eric, as he stepped out and it was dark. But I've known Eric for many years now. At the time he was working and recording the album 'Riding with the King', with BB. I really met him when I was out on the road with Alison Krauss. He came to see us play nearby in LA with Alison Krauss and Union Station. We'd finished our show and were back in our dressing-room when our road-manager came in and said, 'Are you guys ready to bring Eric Clapton back?' And Alison just went quiet, like she does. We all said, 'Yea, come on, bring it on,' all laughing and fooling around. And then I heard this British accent in the hallway and I thought, 'Oh, shit, it's him, he's really here.' Alison just went completely silent as she will do. So, I did most of the talking but that was right about the time there was also just after 'Oh Brother, Where Art Thou' and that stuff. So since then I've done most of the Crossroads Guitar Festivals of Eric's."

Having seen Clapton step out onto the darkened stage at London's Festival Hall in January, 2023, as part of the amazing Transatlantic Sessions tour, the closer to Glasgow's Celtic Connections Festival, it was clear from the audience reaction that they didn't expect Clapton to be there. There was a sudden hush and as the lights brightened again after the break, there indeed was Eric with his trademark Signature Martin guitar at the ready.

I remind Jerry of the moment and he confirms the atmosphere hit them all on-stage too:

" He is a fan of Transatlantic, comes to it many times, often comes along to the gig if we're in London or Brighton or somewhere like that. And he asked me, 'Jerry, I'd love to play one-time.' He kept asking me if he could play and I kept putting him off because I didn't want it – and he didn't want it – to be about him! This time it just seemed like the perfect time. I told him I was playing 'While My Guitar Gently Weeps' every night, so asked him do you want to play on that? He said, 'Yea, I'll play on that!' And I thought well, that's a great way to get you up there with us. And he played Sam Hall, a surprise for many. Yea, people must have been thinking, 'What's he playing this Irish protest song for?'"

"And of course, since that night, I've been back to London, to Abbey Road studios, and we recorded a session with Eric and the guys from the Transatlantic Sessions gig. We brought them all back together for that. The whole shooting-match. We recorded in Abbey Road for two days. Eric said he'd recorded the song (Sam Hall) before with different people but it just didn't sound right; then when he played it with us on the Transatlantic gig in Festival Hall, it was right, it was what he'd been looking for, the right sound and feel. 'That's it,' he said, 'that's exactly the way I want to hear it.'"

'So, I said, well, I'll get all the guys together and we'll go in and record it. He agreed, saying, 'Yea, let's take care of it, let's do it!' We ended up recording a few other songs too, and it all went really well. Afterwards I said to him, you know, you've got a great future in this business! Recording this kind of music with this kind of band, you've got a future! I said, it will all go well, another nice arrow to go in your quiver! "

"I tried to put it in their faces"

He then confirms he is still mining the rich Nashville Americana seam:
"I was recording last week with Brad Paisley. We were in a coal mine in West Virginia! That was great. I keep my iron in many fires. As I say, I'm opening this summer for John McLaughlin. A very different genre for me! John's doing his swansong right now so it's that time and place for a lot of people. For us, I guess!"

We again laugh recalling another anecdote he shared about meeting and working with Tom Waits:

"I was just learning how to smoke. I was standing outside at the Cellar Door in DC, and he was opening up for a band I was in called the Country Gentlemen, a bluegrass band. We were really big in the 70s and 80S. Tom was our opening act. He was standing outside smoking and I was standing outside with him trying to learn how to smoke. As people turned up to go into the club he'd sort of weigh them up and say 'That's one of mine,' and the next, maybe, 'That's one of yours.' It was kinda fun but that's the only real conversation we've ever had. I'd just love to run into him again and remind him of our time together! I really admire him and he's had a great, long acting career too. He's just such a multi-faceted, talented person."

I remind Jerry of another story we shared a few years ago about how when he first started playing Dobro guitar, nobody really knew what a Dobro then was. Whereas now, he has firmly put the instrument centre-stage on the global musical stage as an acclaimed master. Jerry laughs modestly and responds:

"If I've done anything, that's fine by me, that's what I've done, I hope. I've put it in so many places they just couldn't ignore it any more really! I tried to put it in their faces as much as possible. And I still do!"

We joke about his stance, with the guitar as a lap-type instrument but him on his feet holding the guitar, strapped in front. Again, Douglas laughs and says: "To me, that's the right way to play it. If you hold it like this – he mimics holding a guitar in normal position – to me you just can't see what's going on! The way I hold it is right, it's all laid out like a piano. I look at it that way. If I played slide otherwise it would be another instrument, just not right for me."

Jerry confirms he does play normal slide guitar but adds the delicious rider: "I do play like that. Just to be dangerous! You know, I've played Dobro for so long, I see it sort of floating in the air in front of me so that's the way I envisage the instrument and how it should be. Everyone else is wrong," he adds with another full-throated laugh.

SITTING IN WITH...

THE CHICAGO BLUES LEGENDS

Colin Campbell

At the Great British Rhythm and Blues Festival at Butlins, Skegness one of the best concerts there was one held in the venue called Reds. Here, Giles Robson introduced and played with, Jamiah Rogers, Billy Branch and John Primer an eclectic generational mix of Chicago blues players. The same day, Blues Matters caught up with these artists for a short discussion about The Chicago Blues Legends tour, how this came to materialise, and all things blues related. It went something like this…

The idea of putting this show on and getting the artists together was engineered by award winning harmonica player Giles Robson. He explains; We wanted to get together, two of the greatest legends of Chicago blues, Billy Branch the crown prince of Chicago blues harmonica players and John Primer who has an incredible pedigree: Muddy Waters, Little Walter, Junior Wells, he was also in Teresa's House Band, Willie Dixon. He is also a prolific solo artist in his own right. Two genuine craftsmen as well as artists with top pedigrees. When I asked them who they wanted to join them, we wanted a young and upcoming blues artist who is leading the charge into the future, Jemiah Rogers was the name that came up, so we are delighted to bring fresh, young blues Chicago talent to the UK. The ethos was bringing Chicago legends with the next generation.

Opening the discussion about blues music in general was Jamiah Rogers who stated: It's home grown. First off, my father is a guitar player who had a blues thing going back in Chicago. I learned the drums at three years old, my father taught me, that is how I got into the blues, and I got into my first blues band soon after. Age seven my father bought me a guitar and told me it was time to sing. So, from seven to twenty-seven that's all I've been doing in Chicago! Billy Branch is the prince of harmonica players in Chicago blues, in fact blues period! He's been watching me since I was six or seven and he's helped me become what I am now. With John Primer, we've watched ourselves from a distance, within the past five years we've worked closer with each other and worked on the same scene, that's how we met.

John Primer's introduction to blues music was something different; I grew up listening to blues when I was younger in Mississippi. My grandmother and my cousins would play blues records, which inspired me a lot. To me I always wanted to be a blues musician, I started playing this on a one string Diddley Bow outside my grandmother's house I was about three years old playing John Lee Hooker and all that kind of stuff. That inspired me to be a bluesman anyway. I heard BB King in Memphis he was on the radio playing his guitar he inspired me a lot to play the blues. I always wanted to play blues like Muddy Waters, my family in Mississippi were sharecroppers, picking cotton and corn, I came from a hard time. If you do not know, what hard times are you might have the blues but not like a person who has had real hard times growing up! I have got a new CD out called Hard Times and that is why I recorded it. The pandemic came and we got hard times. I'm glad to be with Giles, Billy and Jemiah playing the blues. I'm glad I came,

doing this still inspires me and it gives me a chance to see a lot of my fans everywhere I go in Europe. Billy and I go way back….

Billy Branch continues; I have done a Blues In Schools programme since 1978 teaching youngsters from Chicago and all across the globe. This is historical because you've got two generations here, John and I have been doing this for over forty years and Jemiah is up and coming. It is really refreshing to see the blues continuing. John and I were privileged to have played and recorded with some of the greatest, Willie Dixon, Koko Taylor, Junior Wells, and hundreds of others on the way. We are very aware we are becoming scarce. In addition to the greats that have passed away there's not many of us left who in our young age, hey I was going into Teresa's when I was eighteen years old. As universal as the blues is, it's still African American folk tradition, black folk's folk music. The fact you have three African American artists is actually kind of rare these days. That is the paradox of the blues because the people who created it are the least likely to be in the audience or on the stage! They put on Blues Festivals but don't have black artists playing that's a bit of an oxymoron. Except for maybe Buddy Guy, you are hard pressed to name older blues players. Bobby Rush is there. Therefore, a lot of the people coming through never got a chance to hear them let alone play with them. So, the styles change, again John and I are privileged. We have played with a lot of players in a lot of Clubs. When I came on the scene, you'd probably be able to play in thirty places seven nights a week these places were jumping to the sounds of Lefty Dizz, Hound Dog Taylor, Honey Boy Edwards, and the likes. We learned from these people. It's not like jazz because that automatically assumes a certain discipline. If you're going to play like Charlie Parker, you have to play well. With the blues people think they can just play anything that is not true, you're playing the form but not playing with the feeling. The chord progressions of Robert Lockwood and Fenton Robinson are missed. Consequently, the people coming through now do not have the same respect for the music they're playing. They do not have the knowledge or admiration. On the other side of that coin, we are seeing young black American artists coming in. John reflects; There are not so many Clubs now to play in Chicago, Buddy Guy's legends, Kingston Mines, Blue Chicago, and Rosa's Lounge.

John interjected; The rock blues guys get more recognition than traditional guys get. But we're all in this bag together, all blues musicians. It should be just one name, don't play rock and roll and call yourself a blues band.

Jamiah: They do a Pinetop Perkins workshop now where all the kids from Mississippi and further south come and learn about blues and experience the blues way of life, go to plantations, it was more than the music, it was a lifestyle back then. I play blues rock but that's just one side to me, there's a time for that but also a certain way to do slow blues. There are more ways to play a one four five chord progression! Best advice is to take your time. John added, yes go on stage with a feeling for what you're playing. It is showtime, it's an entertainment. Take BB King he played and shook his head and play guitar, Muddy Waters shook his body and played straight forward blues. They sat there and played; everyone had their own style. Billy: I used to stand on my head and play harmonica, not that often, I maybe still could!

John sums things up; You cannot change the blues, it's one solid thing simple. Anyone can play the blues doesn't matter what colour you are. The blues came from Africa on the ships, and they started speaking and singing words that's where it came from. Blues got feeling but it ain't got no colour. You can feel it, but you can't see it!

Q&A WITH LAURENCE JONES

Laurence Jones is a British blues rock guitarist and singer-songwriter from Liverpool. He first began playing the guitar at the age of seven and quickly gained a reputation as a prodigious talent. Jones has since released several acclaimed albums, including "Thunder in the Sky" and "The Truth," which showcase his unique blend of blues, rock, and soul.

Jones has toured extensively throughout the UK and Europe, playing at some of the world's most prestigious venues and festivals. He has also shared the stage with some of the biggest names in the music industry, including Joe Bonamassa, Buddy Guy, and Van Morrison.

With his soulful voice and impressive guitar skills, Laurence Jones has established himself as one of the most exciting and innovative blues artists of his generation.

Q. When did you start recording Bad Luck & Blues?

A. We started recording the album in January, and it only took eight days, we recorded all of the tracks within three days, I believe. We did it live, because I didn't want to have loads of overdubs, and I wanted the feel of a power trio. This really flowed because it was natural, and having a power trio allowed it to be more open and I could get more energy as I do performing live as opposed to getting a normal studio sound"

Q. Did you record the album in the same way as Destination Unkown, live on the floor at Marshall Studios?

A. We did it in exactly the same way as we did with the last album. Last year, I'd already spent a couple of years in pre-production, but with this album, I'd written it pretty much within a month. In December, I'd come in fresh from the road off the back of a great tour of the Netherlands, I'd been contemplating for a long time about how I wanted it to be done. I sat down, and it took over my whole Christmas, even on Christmas Day, I was writing tunes, and on Boxing Day, New Year's Day, and that's when I decided that I wanted the power trio. I spoke to Marshall and they were like, this is a bit of a shock, I'd already got the idea of the concept and what I wanted, so we went ahead and did it"

Q. Who else is involved on the album?

A. We've got Ash Sheehan who has been the drummer for Glenn Hughes and Tony Iommi, and we also have the same bass player from the last album, Jack Alexander Timmis, who has also played with Virgil & The Accelerators, who are a classic blues/rock band that has been around for many years, it's a great unit to be involved with. I've known Ash since I was sixteen, he was a drum teacher at my college. I've known Jack since I was about eighteen at The Upton Blues Festival. He was playing on the main stage with Virgil, and I was like, one day I'm going to get that bass player in my band"

Q. You have written all of the songs, do you write the lyrics first, or do you write the music first?

A. With this, I wrote all the music first for every song, so the guitar came first not so much the vocals. The lyrics drop in and fit around the guitar, this way, it makes the songs more blues/rock rather than the lyrics first, which would make it sound a bit more pop-like. I guess that's why it came so easy because the guitar had come first"

Q. Is there a live album on the horizon anytime soon?

A. I was thinking about it, I get so many requests from people to do a live album, that's why I did the Thunder In The Sky single because I really wanted to get a live track out there, because it captures the audience, and the really like to be a part of it. I would like to do a DVD if I'm honest if I'm going to do a live album, I'd like to also capture it on DVD. I'm going on a big tour at the end of the year around the UK and the Netherlands, so who knows, it might be in the pipeline"

Bad Luck & Blues is released on 25th August. There is an album launch show on 22nd September at Omeara in London.

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BIG BLUES REVIEWS

SAMANTHA FISH & JESSE DAYTON

DEATH WISH BLUES

Rounder Records

Dynamic blues force Samantha Fish and country outlaw Jesse Dayton come together for their new collaborative album Death Wish Blues. The pair's latest album follows off the back of the three-track Stardust Sessions EP which was released at the end of 2022. This time around fans are treated to 12 tracks including recent single Deathwish. The infectious groove and catchy hooks of the latter immediately draw you in at the top of the album. And at just 2 minutes and 39 seconds in duration, it leaves the listener wanting more. Which is a good job, as eleven

> *leaves the listener wanting more!*

more tracks follow. Jesse Dayton takes the lead on Down In The Mud, which has a truly funky groove. Whilst the influence of producer Jon Spencer shines through on old-school blues number and their recent single Riders. A song with RL Burnside undertones, which you can imagine being played in a Mississippi juke joint. The same could be said of Trauma. A song with a tight beat, and a danceable rhythm. The track also showcases Dayton's lyric prowess. Whilst the fuzz-fuelled psychedelic guitar breakdown of the song once again highlights Spencer's influence on the project. The album showcases many different musical stylings. Lover On The Side showcases a country feel with blues undertones. Whilst Rippin and Running has a feel for Bentonia, or Hill Country Blues typified by the raw guitar tone and unmistakable rhythm. The duo switch things up somewhat with Supadupabad. And with a title like that, you would expect nothing less than an up-tempo funky number with a garage rock feel. The twelve-track release comes to its conclusion with a wonderfully harmonious love ballad titled You Know My Heart. Samantha Fish is not afraid to push the boundaries of the blues genre. Now with Death Wish Blues, the blues supremo alongside Jesse Dayton has done it again and to good measure.

ADAM KENNEDY

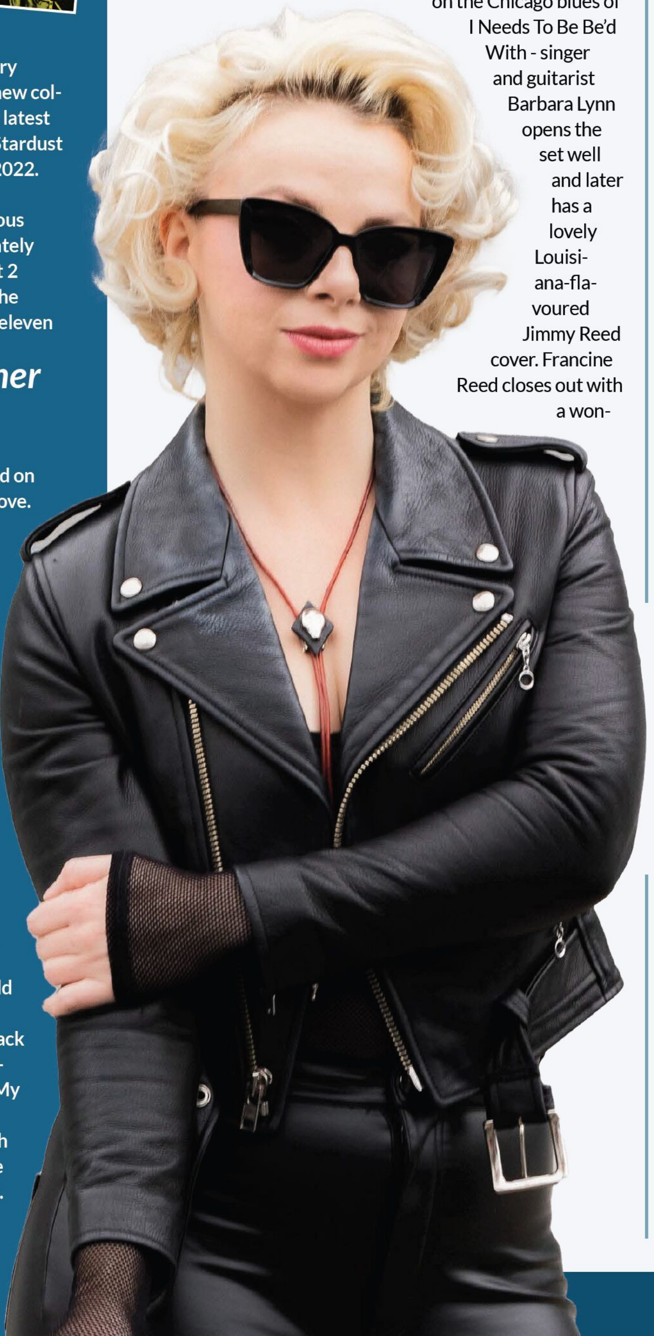
BOB CORRITORE & FRIENDS

WOMEN IN BLUES SHOWCASE

VIZZTONE

Based for many years in Phoenix, Arizona, where he owns The Rhythm Room, harmonica ace Bob Corritore has been a torchbearer for the pure blues since he came on the scene in Chicago back in the 70s, and with his From The Vaults series (of which this is one) he has been issuing classy material from his huge archive. This set obviously focusses on female blues vocalists, recorded between 2001 and 2022, with five previously unissued tracks. Frontwomen range from the Queen, Koko Taylor herself, and the wonderful Windy City blues of What Kind Of Man Is This, to the folk/ blues of Valerie June with Crawdad Hole. Shy Perry has a fine, slightly speeded-up cover of Wang Dang Doodle (often associated with Koko), Diunna Greenleaf has a bright, upbeat Be For Me and a tough and lively Don't Mess With The Messer, whilst young Aliya Primer does her dad John proud with a worthy, confident cover of Slim Harpo's Te Ni Nee Ni Nu. Veteran Carol Fran is stupendous on her three offerings – she rivals Koko on the Chicago blues of I Needs To Be Be'd With - singer and guitarist Barbara Lynn opens the set well and later has a lovely Louisiana-flavoured Jimmy Reed cover. Francine Reed closes out with a wonderful moody cover of Pops Staples' Why Am I Treated So Bad. Bob himself is in excellent form throughout, and he has assembled a very impressive, hand-picked cast of backing musicians, including the likes of Bob Margolin, the aforementioned John Primer, Kid Ramos, bassist Bob Stroger and drummers Willie "Big Eyes" Smith and Chico Chism, among many others equally worthy. As I said earlier, class all the way.

NORMAN DARWEN



TONY HOLIDAY

MOTEL MISSISSIPPI

FORTY BELOW RECORDS

This is Tony Holiday's second solo release and was recorded at Zebra Studio Coldwater Mississippi. It blends North Mississippi Hill Country with Memphis soul, Delta Blues and stomping tunes, something for any music lover to sit back and let the music heal the soul. Eight great tracks with two reinterpretations. The first one opens the release, Rob And Steal, a Paul Wine Jones tune, dark ethereal swampy blues, Tony on harmonica and vocals ably assisted by hypnotic guitar tones by Dave Gross not your typical blues guitarist, the phrasing is the thing here. Get By accentuates the rhythm section, Terrance Grayson on bass guitar and drummer Lee Williams technically brilliant guitar work with Dave Gross again. On the tune, Trouble keyboard player Victor Wainwright, joins in the party with a clavinet solo, a work of genius and suits Tony's vocals. She's So Cold is a melting pot of blues rooted guitar chords, swampy, big sound, catchy chorus. Just As Gone has Jack Friel on harmonica and AJ Fullerton and Aubrey McCrady on guitar, there's slide aplenty here adding to the band. Asie Payton's, Nobody But You slows the tempo, a stylish laid-back steady riff on this love song. You Know Who I Am is atmospheric, the band getting their groove on and Tony's vocals strong and forthright,

at the song's bridge it turns into a bluesy juke joint jam, live this will sound amazing, visceral lyrics. Yazoo River is the final song, the listener is taken to the bayou on this one, full of Cajun spirit this instrumental that highlights the band's talent. Blues music is always updating, and Tony puts his mark all over these stunning tracks, a masterpiece.

COLIN CAMPBELL

ED PHILIPS AND THE MEMPHIS PATROL

SELF-TITLED

LIGHTENING RECORDS

By looking at the cover of this Cd, I can tell this is going to be old school Rock and Roll Blues. With that Memphis guitar and double bass sound driving through all the songs, harmonies and beautiful backing vocals are also there with Vitoria Tori More, plus Pedro Kosztolics on sax, Ed and The Patrol have an Elvis look about them from G. I Blues, and that's evident from some of the covers they do on this cd. Songs like That's Alright and Hard Headed Woman, boy, are we treated to some songs, seventeen in fact. Songs that flow effortlessly from one to the other, it's almost a tribute album to early Elvis but that's not a bad thing as for most of us Elvis was the first to bring Blues to the mainstream. These people are pure Rock & Roll and I find myself singing along to some joyous tunes like Treat Me Nice and I Got Stung, I did say almost an Elvis tribute. I'm not sure what the future has in store for these guys but by holding onto the past in song form, I'm sure they'll be busy on the Americana circuit, and they will have you jumping about if you catch them live, so if you like Elvis, if you like Rock & Roll, you'll love this.

BARRY BLUES BARN HOPWOOD

ALABAMA MIKE

STUFF I'VE BEEN THROUGH

LITTLE VILLAGE FOUNDATION

Alabama Mike Benjamin writes songs the way he interprets life. On these eleven well-crafted original tracks, he mixes emotions and topics that are unexpected. Case in point are the tracks; Fat Shame Part one and two where he takes a swipe at airlines and acknowledges his own culturally perceived notion of being overweight, just listen to the lyrics. Title song opens the release, Stuff I've Been Through is biographical about his tribulations to a background of Stax like style tones, vocally and musically. His vocals are honest and heartfelt throughout and witty; King Cock being an example, about a rooster in the barnyard full of double meanings set to a New Orleans backbeat. Producer Kid Andersen plays guitar throughout. The tracks were recorded at Greaseland Studios California. Bobby Young plays guitar on four songs and guests Rusty Zinn and Anson Funderburgh appearing on another two. Keyboards are shared between Jim Pugh and Lorenzo Hawkins, bass line between Jerry Jemmott, AJ Joyce and Endre Tarczy and drums between Derrick 'D'Mar' Martin and Ronnie Smith. The horn section is tremendous throughout as are backing vocals. Mike sings lead vocals throughout and plays harmonica on one track, Rick Estrin also features on a track on harmonica. This Ain't No Dizneyland challenges the rift in social classes in that state of America, a sleazy blues tune with a laid-back groove. On, Pine Bluff Arkansas he plays harmonica and pays tribute to women in his own subtle way. This also noted on the excellent stomping Woman On The Warpath, swirling organ tones, screaming guitars this has the lot. This also has two bonus live tracks, Mississippi and God Is With You.

COLIN CAMPBELL

IVY GOLD

BROKEN SILENCE

Golden Ivy Records

A singer named Manou, hailing from Mozart's city of Salzburg, fronting up a hard blues-rock band of veteran musicians, should be an unusual enough blend to pique the interest of dedicated blues aficionados. Factor in the beguiling beauty of Manou's voice and image, and this strong set of songs, and Ivy Gold should eventually be rambling around the globe's arenas on the evidence of this debut release. As evidence, the opening and title track, Broken Silence, bursts forth with an exquisite bluesy guitar lick to introduce Manou's powerful vocal. Her strong tones belie the fact that she only began singing professionally well into her thirties. The second song in and the funky blues on the tongue firmly in cheek title, Ordinary Woman, exhibits the breadth of this band's influences. As further proof, the muscular arrangement on Got What I Need with Sebastian Eder's heavy guitar riff and scorching solo; both Kevin Moore's bass and Tal Bergman's drum breakdown; delicately played keyboard ambience from Anders Olinder and orchestral bvs by the lady from Salzburg, reveals a band well studied in bringing diverse influences into play. The catchy chorus on House Of Cards and the deft I Am That I Am, on which Manou commands with her vocal prowess, puts this assembly of players head and ears above several aspiring groups. There's also a balance of power and subtlety happening here that's delivered with a panache undoubtedly developed from, as the epic Six Times Gone narrates, banging on doors around the blues block more than a few times.

> ***Ivy Gold should eventually be rambling around the globe's arenas***

The collective experience of the musicians ensures that It would be an understatement to say that Sacred Heart fulfils the blues rock ballad requirement. Although it has all the hallmarks, it's the passionate arrangement in which it is delivered that connects it to a higher listening experience. Furthermore, an excellent production brings out the quality of the tunes and performances. Drifting, with its experimental jazzy riff and minor chord feel, reiterates the adventurous nature of this album as does the paean to peace on Broken Wings Of Hope. A bonus live track, Old Love, showcases this group's live power. There's not a single duff track on an album that provides all players with many moments to shine and a mono-named singer who revels in the power of her mid-register vocal.

PAUL DAVIES

NICK SCHNEBELEN

WHAT KEY IS TROUBLE IN

VIZZTONE

Nick Schnebelen and his band have been touring America for the last few years with George Thorogood & The Destroyers and he is a multiple blues-music award winner. His latest album contains thirteen original tracks of high-energy Blues/Rock opening with Ten Years After Fifty Years Later a thunderous tribute to Alvin Lee featuring nifty fretwork and a storming guitar solo. Title track What Key Is Trouble In is a mid-paced rocker featuring pithy, muscular licks reminding me of Magic Slim. Love In My Heart is a funky race to the finish with drummer Adam Hagerman leading the band's charge and Schnebelen firing out tasty guitar salvos. A change of pace comes with the slow blues ballad Blues Nights featuring soulful vocals and a tasteful guitar solo. Hard Driving Woman finds Schnebelen channelling his inner Freddie King with heartfelt vocals and stinging guitar licks. Will I Stay is a speedy blues-rocker and Pain Aside is a lively toe-tapper featuring pumping bass from Cliff Moore and optimistic vocals. The steady rocking Poor Side Of Town is followed by my favourite track a sizzling ZZ Top style boogie called Jonny Cheat featuring honking sax from Buddy Leach. The broody, atmospheric Big Mean Dog features pained vocals, a wild distorted guitar sound and wailing organ from Aaron Mayfield. The hard hitting Lynyrd Skynyrd/Southern Rock vibe of Over The Cliff is a real heavy riffing tour-de-force. Droning Hill country blues style features on the thumping Throw Poor Me Out and the closing People Worry About Me features fuzzy guitar and moody, intense vocals. This fine album is recommended to all Blues/Rock lovers.

DAVE DRURY

GEMINII DRAGON

EQUINOX

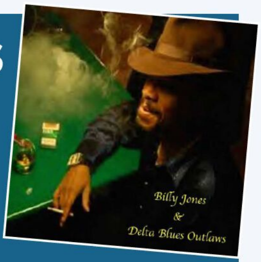
NEPOTISM RECORDINGS

This explosive follow up to her debut recording, Fight Fire With Fire, by this fiery Louisiana singer explodes with Hendrix, Zeppelin and Prince influences from opener Sister Switchblade. It's When The Levee Breaks style big drums and heavy riffs set the hot and smouldering landscape for Jessica Harper/Geminii Dragon to holler her smoky big heart out. Leavening out the sonic attack, Time and The Fighter takes the pace down a step with a slinky smooth and bluesy fug of organ, deep bass, reverb guitar

and snappy snare. With close in the ear vocals, it all conspires to add a touch of class. Then it's back to the loud stuff as Ballad Of Willie Mae & George bounds around with more big riffs. Also, the uplifting You Got It Good is a catchy tune but it's the attention-grabbing Rusty Gun and its Hendrix Zeppelin mashup that catches the ear. Joan Jett & The Runaways had an influential impact on a young Harper which she reflects and repays on final song Bad Rumours. There's so much to commend across this album with its attention to melody and groove. Packing in a whole lotta straightforward music, it's a wonder that these ten tracks only last thirty-six minutes. Overall, it's a short, sharp and pleasurable shock of soundwaves to the senses.

PAUL DAVIES

BILLY JONES & DELTA BLUES OUTLAWS



SELF-TITLED

Delta Blues Records

This album arrived with no information other than the track listing on the rear cover, so impossible to say who is playing on the disc apart from Billy Jones on guitar and vocals; Billy also wrote six of the fifteen tunes, alongside covers of songs from both soul and blues sources. The style is a blend of soul, blues and rock, typified by original tracks like My Love Is Real which combines soulful vocals, horns and B3 with screaming rock guitar. Someone New is a ballad with delicate percussion and soulful vocals, the strings offering a contrast with Billy's Santana style guitar.

> *This generously filled album runs to well over an hour*

Appropriately for the title, I'm Yo Freak includes some very distorted guitar work, Billy declares that he is Ready For Some Lovin', aided by rocking piano that gets the feet tapping, and we get right into the bayou swamps to visit the Alligator Farm, the resident female living in the bayou and administering voodoo potions to Billy. The covers include BB King's classic Don't Answer The Door which closes the album and Billy shows that he can play in BB style on another extended slow blues, Marry My Mother-In-Law, originally by Artie 'Blues Boy' White. Wilson Pickett's Man And A Half barrels along convincingly but Billy's blissed-out guitar is not a good fit for the cover of Homer Banks' Can't Let You Go, a powerful soul ballad with strings and horns. Better are two surprising choices: Vern Godsin's country song Chiselled in Stone is well done and Biggest House In Town is an extended slow blues, somewhat surprisingly credited to Duke Ellington and Don George. This generously filled album runs to well over an hour and offers both blues and soul numbers. Horns and strings appear on several numbers but whether those are synthesised or added as backing tracks is not clear; certainly, the horns sound sampled on opener The One You Need. Billy sings well throughout and plays some solid guitar but does at times stray into more of a rock style.

JOHN MITCHELL

IVAN NEVILLE

TOUCH MY SOUL

THE FUNK GARAGE/MASCOT

The slinky piano intro that sets up a soft sunny groove for the legendary Ivan Neville to cruise his fine vocals all over Hey All Together, with luminaries Bonnie Raitt, Michael McDonald and his brother Aaron Neville, delivers a reassuring warm glow of N'Awlins sunshine. Add in The Greatest Place On Earth, with Trombone Shorty, and this album is Ivan's love-letter to his Mississippi hugging crescent city. It's a musical postcard of songs detailing the fine attributes of this majestic and beguiling place. It's as though Ivan Neville is a one-man musical tourist board for his home city. And who better to guide the listener on a tour of the magical place that made him? It's an album seared through with the unmistakable feel of this area with a gumbo of funk, horns and uplifting ballads. In an ever-increasing time of autotuning and studio cheating, this record is also a testament to a true talent that speaks for itself. Ivan's voice on Might Last A Lifetime, with percussive brother Cyril - and title track, Touch My Soul, puts to shame all practitioners of this chicanery. Surprisingly, this is Ivan Neville's first solo album in 20 years and it's an on song creative splurge of down in the groove positive messages. The nitty-gritty gettin' down with your big bad self groove on Dance Music Love, replete with a spooky guitar solo by Doyle Bramall II, is full of a natural and uplifting vitality. This remarkable release also comes with probably the best Talking Heads cover song that anybody will ever hear. The funky N'Awlins horns and groove underpinning This Must be The Place sweetly transports this Heads' song into another dimension beyond its original incarnation. Touch My Soul is a super-fine solo return by Ivan Neville.

PAUL DAVIES

CHRIS COPEN

I GOT HIPPED

Blue Dane Records

I have not come across the name of Chris Copen before, so this has turned into a very nice surprise indeed. Copen himself has written three of the songs on the album, the rest are songs from artists who have their roots firmly in New Orleans. The album is a celebration of the culture and music of The Big Easy, as New Orleans is sometimes referred to. Do Our Thing (Funkyfied) is the opening track and does exactly what it says on the tin. Very funky, in fact, funky as funk can be. You immediately get the feel of what this album is trying to convey to you, everything that is good and absorbing about New Orleans.

> *gives another kind of insight into the musical gem that is New Orleans*

Reading the liner notes, they paint a picture of where these guys are from, and what influences they have had. Somebody Changed The Lock (Mac Rebenack) or as we know him better, Dr. John Chris Copen provides a brilliant vocal on this song, as well as playing the piano in a boogie style, don't be misled, this is not Chris trying to copy Mac, this is his version of a song that you may not have on the tip of your tongue. New Orleans has had many blues artists at its core, and some of their work is featured on this remarkable gumbo of an album, Allen Toussaint, Cousin Lee, and Sonny Thompson. It gives another kind of insight into the musical gem that is New Orleans, the real gumbo, a melting pot, of so many different takes on the blues and funk. The final track is a sweet instrumental from Henry Roeland "Roy" Byrd, more commonly known as Professor Longhair, the song being, Tipitina. A delightful way to end a very good album. New Orleans has given so much in the way of blues music, with this creation, it has given us a little bit more.

STEPHEN HARRISON

BOO BOO DAVIES

BOO BOO BOOGALOO

BLUE LOTUS RECORDINGS

This is projected as a rough, tough, songs that take no prisoners, type of album. An authentic blues album in my mind, just a bunch of musicians playing and singing the blues the way that they would back in the very early 50s. So, now we know where we are starting from, and to be honest, the description that comes with the album is spot on. Boo Boo Davies has written all the songs on the album, as well as providing the vocals, and also the harp on every track. Boo Boo, or James Davies, as he was born, hails from Drew, Mississippi, where his family home would often be frequented by the likes of John Lee Hooker and Elmore James. There was obviously a big blues upbringing in that household, from his father, down to Boo and his two brothers. So it seems appropriate that the first song on the album is entitled, Little House By Myself, which from the off puts a smile on my face, not least because the description of the album is entirely correct. This is blues as blues should be played, rough, dirty, and blowing the harp. Having started his blues education in Mississippi,

the family relocated to St. Louis, where Boo began to hone his skills in a live setting, learning the hard way. This is evident in tunes such as At The Red Door, and the immaculate, Blues On My Mind, highlighting his harp playing and his raspy vocals. It seems that over the past few months, there seems to have been somewhat of a glut of blues albums that fit similar criteria, rough, authentic, no-nonsense blues. What this album does is shows that recording a blues album does not have to be difficult. That's not to say that playing the blues to a standard like this is easy, far from it, it means that to produce an authentic, rustic blues album, all that you need to do is let the blues musicians do what they do best, play the blues. Let them loose in a studio and let it all come naturally. I Got The Crying Blues sums this up perfectly, the harp can make you weep in a blues tune, as it does here, whilst leaving you with a satisfied mind having listened to an album as good as this.

STEPHEN HARRISON

THE YARDBIRDS

LIVE IN SWEDEN 1967

REPERTOIRE RECORDS

Following a somewhat turbulent period in their career and the departures of Clapton and Beck the band had now settled into a slimmed down four-piece line-up. Jimmy Page took over lead guitar alongside founder members Keith Relf on vocals and harmonica, Chris Dreja on bass and Jim McCarty on drums for a visit to Sweden. This radio show opened with the group-scripted Shapes Of Things and it is immediately clear that the band are tight and on great form and enjoying themselves. Next up the band tear into the Indian influenced Heart Full Of Soul with Page firing out that familiar chiming guitar lick and the others responding splendidly. This line-up are focused and playing with fire and passion, great stuff and sound quality is excellent! McCarty's stomping drums and Page's extended catchy guitar solo light up the hard rocking Mr You're A Better Man Than I. Relf gets to blow his harp on a lively cover of Bob Dylan's song Most Likely You Go Your Way And I'll Go Mine. It was always the guitar playing that made The Yardbirds standout from their peers and become increasingly influential as the band moved on from their blues roots into the psychedelic era. That trend is especially evident on the great psych classic Over Under Sideways Down. Manager Mickie Most brought the poppy Little Games to the band as a single and also the American soul song My Baby. The grand finale to this show is a lengthy workout of Bo Diddley's oft covered classic I'm A Man featuring thumping drums, blueswailing harp and inspired bluesy guitar from Page including the bowed guitar technique that he later used with Led Zeppelin. This CD serves as a good reminder of what a great and influential band The Yardbirds were, and incidentally, they are touring in 2023.

DAVE DRURY

JOHNNY WHEELS & THE SWAMP DONKEYS

KEEP ON PUSHIN'

LIGHTING IN A BOTTLE RECORDS

John Kennicot was sadly paralysed from the waist down in an accident when he was twelve but is clearly a determined guy as he is now the vocalist and harp player in his eponymous band. Alongside guitarist Brandon Logan and bassist Taylor Frazier, the three sharing all writing credits here. Jimi Bott (Fabulous Thunderbirds, Mannish Boys) is on drums and engineered/produced the sessions at his studio in Oregon, joined by Steve Kerin on keys, Joe Mack-McCarthy on horns and LaRhonda Steele on vocals. The material ranges across styles but is at its strongest on soulful songs like opener, On The Run, Johnny's vocals having just the right amount of grit over a big sounding production with a horn-rich arrangement and a strong guitar solo that serves the song well. The band offers a funky edge on the enigmatic title George Fisk and Johnny plays the angst-ridden lover as he prepares to leave This Time, the first tune on which his harp is featured. As Long As You're There is a soul ballad well sung by Johnny with fine piano and tasty guitar, Light Me Up a faster-paced tune but still with a light touch and The Fall has a very dramatic feel as Johnny seeks help from above and Brandon plays some frenetic slide. Finding Your Way Back Home is marred by rather over-indulgent fretwork and Mizz Karman has distorted vocals that did nothing for this reviewer, but things get right back on track with closer Time To Bail which sounds a little like Warren Haynes' Soulshine and carries a message about perseverance: "Keep on pushin' down that trail, I know it's hard but it's not your time to bail". The longest track on the album, the tune is also graced by a fine, delicate guitar solo and wonderfully soulful, gospel-infused backing vocals from LaRhonda Steele. This is an interesting and listenable debut album bookended by two outstanding songs and we should look out for more from Johnny Wheels and his bandmates.

JOHN MITCHELL

MARCUS MALONE & THE MOTOR CITY HUSTLERS

INTERSTATE 75

RAM ROCK RED RECORDS

The Motor City Hustlers, suggests to me that Marcus Malone and his band hail from Detroit, but that is not important right now. What is important is this album, Interstate 75. It is very important for a couple of reasons, (a) I'm a

LAURENCE JONES

BAD LUCK & BLUES

Marshall Records

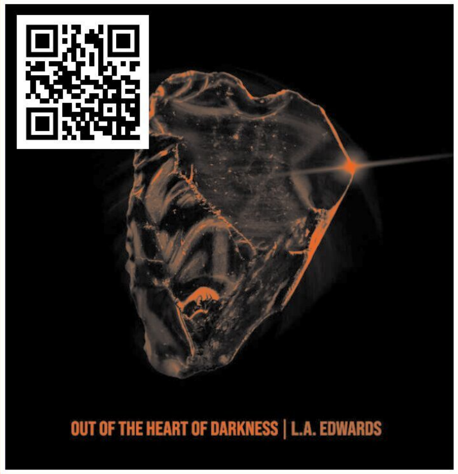
It hardly seems like five minutes since I was reviewing Destination Unknown his first album for Marshall Records. You know what they say, you can't keep a good man down. Well, that's what has happened here, Laurence Jones is back with a brand new album, Bad Luck & Blues. Ten brand-new songs and two new musicians were invited into the fold, Jake Alexander Timmis-bass, and Ash Sheeran-drums. This is definitely a power trio that we have become accustomed to when we think about Laurence Jones. The title track, Bad Luck & Blues kicks off the album at breakneck speed. The blues/rock mantle is now stitched into the skin of Laurence, it's a mantle that he wears well.

> *a great vocalist, and a songwriter to boot*

The addition of these guys on bass and drums respectively, certainly adds a heavier sound to the songs. But let us not forget what Jones is all about. He's a very accomplished guitarist, a great vocalist, and a songwriter to boot. Laurence Jones, as we all know, is no slouch when it comes to playing lead guitar. This is evident on, Lost And Broken, the guitar sound that he brings to this song is so sweet and clear, it's a belter of a tune that packs a mighty riff-laden punch. Bringing in new personnel doesn't always achieve everything that you thought it would, but in this instance, Laurence has hit musical gold. On hearing the intro to, Woman, I was immediately reminded of ZZ Top. That is not a bad thing to have in your mind, it has that Texas shuffle about it, with a rockier edge, a great tune. One thing that Bad Luck & Blues does not do, it does not allow you to draw breath, it's relentless, power track after power track. This is what Laurence Jones always delivers. When the album ends, take a deep breath, sit down, take another deep breath, then listen to the album again.

STEPHEN HARRISON

NEW ALBUM OUT NOW



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TRABANTS
LOCKDOWN

International Fuzz Society

By a strange coincidence, I had a conversation about Trabants a few days before this CD arrived for review. It consisted of how Eastern European taxi drivers preferred driving their old Trabants to newer, more prestigious cars by western manufacturers, as they were more reliable, they knew what they were doing, they were simpler than the more modern items and yes, they were a bit old-fashioned but what the heck? They still did the job. The same comments apply in some ways to this Los Angeles band, with a floating line-up based around composer/ guitarist and otherwise multi-instrumentalist/ recording engineer Eric Penna.

> *an excellent, all instrumental blues set*

Eric reaches back to the 60s for much of his inspiration for this excellent, all instrumental blues set, but the styles range from a John Lee Hooker flavoured stomp like the opening Detour to the acoustic slide based rural blues styling of the closing track, Mudlark, via fuzzed-out psychedelic blues such as Chicago Born, California Raised, the heavy sounding Leaving Town and the brooding Dreadwind. Then there is a very impressive slow Buddy Guy-ish Chicago club blues performance of the title track, the strutting R'n'B of Make It Snappy and the upbeat Mambo On Moore St, with Glenn Brigman's Farfisa organ instantly creating a pleasing and very distinctive retro sound. The longest track here is eighteen seconds short of four minutes, and the overall running time for these ten numbers is twenty-six minutes. As someone else said to me recently, there's no school like the old school!

NORMAN DARWEN

newcomer to the band, and I always like hearing bands for the first time, (b) It's a magnificent collection of songs. This album is a fine concoction of soul, funk, and blues, with a slight hint of calypso here and there. Marcus Malone takes very good care of the vocal duties, with Dan Smith playing almost everything else on the album, guitar, Hammond, piano, etc. Throw in a fantastic horn section that includes, Saxophone, trumpet, and Trombone, and what you have is a very soulful funky/ blues album. Ain't No Telling opens up with a wonderful, lively soul tune, the horns working overtime, complementing the vocals, lyrics, and harmonies so well. As well as playing the majority of instruments, Dan Smith also lends his hand to backing vocals, this is what you call, multi-talented. I swear to God that this album gets better with each track, one after another, a musical soul/ funk/blues gem. It would be remiss of me to even try to pick a standout track from this album, it would not be fair. Hurt Wals Out Of The Door, would certainly qualify as the standout track, lively, bouncy, full of groove and fun. But that just sums up the whole album if I'm honest. The title track, Interstate 75 is almost a history of 1950s America. Classic cars, drive-in movies, soda pop, and burgers, back when the world made some kind of sense. This album has been an absolute joy to listen to, putting a smile on my face so that I feel some sort of comfort. That is what music is all about, isn't it? If so, Interstate 75 has made the world a far better place.

STEPHEN HARRISON

ASHLEY SHERLOCK
JUST A NAME

Ruf Records

This is the debut album from young Manchester guitarist/vocalist Ashley Sherlock with his band Charlie Rachael Kay (bass) and drummer Danny Rigg (ex-Feral Charm). Their early singles piqued the interest of Ruf Records and found the band braving freezing conditions in a converted mill putting together this collection of twelve originals. In interviews Ashley cites Jeff Buckley, Gary Clark Jnr, and Marcus King among his influences and those names give an indication on what's on offer here. This is a very modern take on the blues, encompassing rock, soul and Americana in its grooves. Trouble opens proceedings showcasing Ashley's song writing abilities and his emotional style of singing. He is certainly no slouch on guitar either as the solo takes the song to new heights at the mid-point. It's a great start and a good indicator of the album direction. I Think That She Knows is a classic song of damaged love, with plaintive vocals and crying guitar. The first single Realise is next, a more upbeat punchy rocker that win the band many friends. Empty Street is more reflective, written in the early morning hours alone in his bathroom during lockdown recognising that we all have good and bad sides to our character. Time is one of my personal favourites, the rather jaunty rhythm section at odds with the introspective lyrics giving it a modern swing feel.

> *the more you listen, the more rewarding it becomes...*

Our Love is an out and out love song, the sparse guitar playing perfectly fitting the mood. Goodbye To You is the opposite, rockier more up tempo, angrier with stabbing guitar. Superb in its execution. Dear Elizabeth follows this, a message to a lost love, delivered with pure emotion that builds up and has a shattering guitar solo hidden up its sleeve. Somethings Got To Give leads nicely into Last Call, a mini epic of a track, full of aching remorse about a lost love, the title a metaphor to times up. What If I Said To You continues along the big epic feel of modern rock anthem with big rhythm support. Backstage Wall brings the album to a close, a clever song about the balance required by musicians' partners in sharing the passion for the music, Ashley sings why can't you understand, I'm married to the band? This is what we mean by a grow on album, the more you listen the more rewarding it becomes. It might not appeal to blues traditionists but is a superbly crafted album that highlights Ashley's undoubted song writing skills.

STEVE YOURGLIVCH

THE HEAVY
AMEN

BAD SON RECORDINGS

Recorded with rock production veteran Tchad Blake; Amen is the sixth studio album from four-piece English outfit The Heavy. As the first track Hurricane Coming alludes to, watch out, this release will rock the listeners' soul and just has musical tones throughout, bringing gospel on the harmony led Ain't A Love, the whole release is an energy driven musical feast. The pounding rhythm to Bad Muthafucker accentuates the lyrics, and the drawling soul vocals of Kelvin Swaby just accentuates the band approach. There are notes of comparison with The Black Keys, but they have their own style of delivery. I Feel The Love, takes us to the church with a rousing uplifting feel loving the production here, a real live feel to this track gospel, soul blues all in one sonic package, the band enjoyed themselves here. Messin' With My Mind brings the tempo down, on this tune about relationship

problems, great riff and anthemic chorus make this a grower. Just Like Summer is another slower paced number, soaring harmonies meet with excellent rhythm section with bass player, Spencer Page and drummer Chris Ellul holding steady, also string arrangement amazing. Stone Cold Killer is more blues rock infused with guitarist Dan Taylor soloing; catchy tune sure to be a floor filler. Whole Lot Of Me keeps the melody line sharp with biting bass and melting vocals. Feels Like Rain is a particular highlight encapsulating the full sound. Final tune, Without A Woman keeps the tone slow and bluesy, another phenomenal arrangement. Their best to date, superb.

COLIN CAMPBELL

BAD TEMPER JOE

GLITTER & BLUES

TIMEZONE

I must confess that this is the first time that I have heard any music from this guy. Hailing from Germany, which for many years has been the home of metal and death metal, this blues album is somewhat of a very nice surprise. His main influences range from, Muddy Waters, Elizabeth Cotton, and Big Bill Broonzy. The delta made its way to Europe via the UK in the early sixties and still has a profound on upcoming blues artists. The opening and title track, Glitter & Blues sees Bad Temper Joe showcasing both his vocal attributes and that of playing a Resonator guitar. As blues aficionados will testify, the Resonator guitar has a sound all of its own, it is unique and that is why it features on countless blues albums. Not content with this, BTJ also demonstrates his prowess on electric guitar, amplifying the sound to produce up-tempo littler ditties such as, Pink Panther. Add to that his raspy, gruff vocals, and you have a tune that immediately sticks in your mind. Long Gone Friend Blues allows Nico Dreier to join the album on piano, with just Joe for company. A lovely haunting song with superb lyrics demonstrating the songwriting skills of Joe. Side 2 opens with, All Over Again, which has a more countryfied approach to it. The blend of vocals and musicians is as sweet here as anywhere on the album. This album has gotten under my skin, I must admit, I had a certain amount of trepidation having not heard anything of Joe beforehand. My initial fears have proven fruitless with every song that follows. Now, when you have an album with largely acoustic guitars, and especially a Resonator guitar, you are almost duty-bound to include a song about trains. Have no fear, Two Trains (Runnin' Different Ways) comes along. The Reanator kept the train trundling along the tracks with the steam billowing out as if Casey Jones himself were aboard. Bad Temper Joe has been nominated for numerous blues awards, get a copy of this album, and you will see why.

STEPHEN HARRISON

BIG WOLF BAND

LIVE AND HOWLIN'

INDEPENDENT

Big Wolf Band have brought out a fourteen-track live album, a compendium of original well-crafted songs drenched in blues tones. They are garnering a lot of interest on the UK scene and seen live they really mix things up and are a five-piece solid unit. Jonathan Earp is lead singer and guitarist, a stalwart. Rhythm section comprises Mick Jeynes on bass and Tim Jones on drums. Robin Fox adds the pounding keyboard sonics with Justin Johnson on rhythm guitar. Heaven's Got The Blues opens this interesting set list, vocals are clear and crisp with the rhythm wheelhouse full of pace great opener. Done Wrong By You is upbeat with a New Orleans vibe. I Don't Love You sees the rhythm section really blend another upbeat feel to this. Looking In Your Eyes is slow blues personified, lovely guitar tone and Jonathon's vocals soar on this track. Love That Hurts is a rocking blues tune, the beat is infectious a real crowd pleaser. Better Man is a full throttle in your face organ wielding joy, the band cranking up a pace. Walk In My Shoes keeps the pace going, drumming introduction sets the scene to a rocky vibe. If I Ever Loved Another Woman slows the pace on this solid slow blues tune quite sublime, vocals sharp and emotive. Rolling With Thunder has a great guitar riff and full band sound, again keyboards pepper this tune. Get Out is played with a Texas swagger a highlight number, full on groove. Final tune, Darkest Of My Days is mesmeric and haunting, a showstopper. Excellent band catch them live whenever you can, highly recommended.

COLIN CAMPBELL

LEONARDO GIULIANI

ROGUE

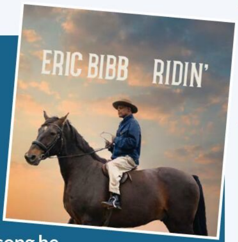
INDEPENDENT

Effortlessly fluid UK-based guitarist Leonardo Giuliani weighs in with some impressive playing on his debut album, Rogue. A self-release it might be, but the budget stretched to hiring noted producer Tom Hambridge for mixing desk duties, and no less a luminary than Robben Ford was roped in as a guest on one track. There's a lot more to this album than modern blues, including some countryfied tracks, a jazz pastiche and a couple of acoustic singer-songwriter efforts. But the modern blues content is the best of it, with much of the soloing displaying what might be described as a restrained Hendrix vibe, the Jimi licks played at studio-compatible volumes with heavily compressed signal rather than ringing free from multiple Marshall stacks. The best

ERIC BIBB

RIDIN'

Stony Plain Records



Roots singer songwriter guitarist and self-confessed griot, Eric brings life to every song he writes and makes the listener think about the lyrics. On his newest release of twelve originals and three traditional tunes he has never been better. He has guests as well; Taj Mahal and Jontavious Willis join him on the foot stomping Blues Funky Like Dat encompassing shared vocals a real highlight. The deep groove tones on the opener Family set the scene and pace for this wonderful laid-back release, intimating importance of being a family, a call for peace.

> ***this release is a sure-fire winner full of great music***

Ridin' is a song about being on the train to freedom, full of great slide playing and ethereal beat this is another stand out. The Ballad Of John Howard Griffin featuring Russell Malone on guitar, a tale about an American author and his view of racial equality. 500 Miles, is a traditional tune, sung with emotion to the backing of banjo and fiddle, very soothing for the soul. Another hard-hitting song is Tulsa Town about a racial massacre, so powerful. Amazing finger picking style noted on the instrumental, Onwards. Hold The Line sees Russell Malone guest on this tune about trying to maintain some order. I Got My Own features Amar Sundy on electric guitar, a great vibe to this. Call Me By My Name features Canadian singer and guitarist Harrison Kennedy, who shares vocals on this tune about the military. Another superb tune is People You Love, which highlights, slide guitar, piano and acoustic guitar. Recommended for all blues lovers, this release is a sure-fire winner full of great music and makes the listener think.

COLIN CAMPBELL

NEW ALBUM OUT NOW

DAVIDROBINSONAKATHECOLDHEARTREVUE.COM

NEW ALBUM OUT NOW

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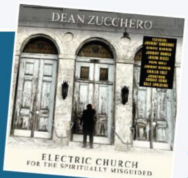
illustration of what I mean here comes on opening track No Limits, audibly built around a slowed-down Watchtower chord progression. Standout track is Ease My Blue, thanks to the aforementioned Mr Ford doing that thing he does with whole-half scales that nobody else even understands. Listen out also for Down Under The Blue Line, Surrendering To The Blues and A Bluesman Gives What A Bluesman' s Got, all good examples of what can still be done with the blues format. Unfortunately, I can't be so enthusiastic about every track, especially the ventures into the other genres. Even so, Giuliani's talent marks him out as a cut above the generic fast young guitar-slinger stereotype. I'm looking forward to future recordings.

DAVID OSLER



DEAN ZUCCHERO

ELECTRIC CHURCH FOR THE SPIRITUALLY MISGUIDED

Pugnacious

The title sums this new release so well, it is full of eclectic music styles based in blues infused flavours in a conceptual album format. Based in New Orleans, bass player singer songwriter and producer Dean got Jake Eckert to engineer this and play guitar on two tracks at Rhythm Shack Studio New Orleans.

> *full of eclectic music styles based in blues*

There are guest musicians on every song on this eleven-track odyssey full of upbeat tunes, great grooves, there are no fillers here, just consummate musicians doing what they love. Big Boss Boy is a tune about a Club owner flirting with a lady, Johnny Rawls tells the tale, the phrasing and delivery is akin to Little Milton style with Johnny Burgin guitar soloing and rhythm section keeping the groove. Fascist Love is an interesting tune, a totalitarian love song apparently, Leslie Smith belting out the lyrics to a Zeppelin style groove, a feelgood tune. Craft Beer is also a fun tune, justifying over drinking, Jonathon Long's vocals and guitar licks make this tune great. The instrumental, DBA has Jason Ricci guesting on harmonica, Joe Krown on organ which powers this tune up to eleven. Last Minute Packer is an interpretation of Ghalia Volt's tune, she sings and plays guitar, Alex McDonald on washboard and Waylon Thibodeaux on fiddle give this a Zydeco feel. Empty Postbox is a perfect raw blues track with Bruce Sunpie Barnes vocals and harmonica player the stars, great bassline from Dean also. A standout release full of different flavours to suit any musical pallet, add it to your collection.

COLIN CAMPBELL

STEVE DAWSON

EYES CLOSED DREAMING

BLACK HEN MUSIC

Steve Dawson is an award-winning Canadian singer- songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, producer and engineer living and working in Nashville, TN. Lockdown was a productive period that produced enough material to make three albums, Gone, Long Gone and Phantom Threshold. Eyes Closed Dreaming is the final album of the trilogy all released within a year. Dawson has collaborated with friends from Nashville, Los Angeles, Toronto and Vancouver on this release. With Fats Kaplin and Tim O'Brien(mandolin), Jay Bellerose(drums), Gary Craig (drums and percussion), Jeremy Holmes (bass) and Chris Gestrin (keyboards), with string arrangement by Ben Plotnick (Viola/Violin) and Kaitlyn Raitz(Cello), and the horn section of Jerry Cook, Dominic Conway and Malcolm Aiken, with additional support on vocals from Allison Russell, Keri Latimer and daughter Casey Dawson. Four original songs co-written with Steve's old friend and Black Hen label-mate; Matt Patershuk form the centrepiece of Eyes Closed Dreaming. Whether it's the skilfully crafted lyrics and sensitive playing on The Owl, the exquisite acoustic guitar picking on the upbeat rootsy Tale of A Gift, the mellow enchanting stings on Hemmingway or the standout Polaroid, they arguably showcase the most compelling performances on the record. Graceful, heartfelt and keenly literate in their observations about love, attainment and the fleeting nature of time. Eyes Closed Dreaming also features a tasteful assortment of song interpretations, House Carpenter sees Dawson breathing new life into this old ancient ballad with intricate guitar work and sympathetic vocals, Ian Tyson's classic Long Time To Get Old and the Johnny Cash gem Guess Things Happen That Way written by Cowboy Jack Clement show a country side, while an uplifting interpretation of Bobby Charles Small Town Talk with subtle horns and harmonies showcase his soulful side. The Waikiki Stonewall rag is a lively original instrumental and the Bix Beiderbecke hit Singing The Blues is a more laidback jazzy instrumental, John Hartford's Let Him Go On Mama, is given a sumptuous solo treatment as Dawson's Weissenborn guitar defines a seductive path to close out the album. Dawson is an excellent guitarist, it's a roots, folk, americana album beautifully played and well worth a listen.

SHIRL

THE BARNESTORMERS

SELF-TITLED

EAST-WEST

This album is not the outcome of a super-group. This album is the outcome of a group of super musicians. Let me start by introducing them. Slim Jim Phantom (drums), Chris Cheney (guitar), Jimmy Barnes (vocals), Jools Holland (piano), Kevin Shirley (producer and percussion) Thomas Lorioux (Slap-Bass), and Ron Dziubla (saxophone). Basically, what we have is an album full of Rockabilly, Rock 'n'Roll, and boogie tunes that for one reason or another, have largely been overlooked by the mainstream audience, that is until these guys rode into town. I have been lucky enough to have been sent the vinyl of this album, so Side 1 kicks off with, Sweet Love On My Mind. From the get-go, this song puts a huge smile on my face, it's such a fun song, as rockabilly songs tend to be. Working For The Man, originally written and performed by Roy Orbison, brings out the best in Jimmy Barnes's vocals. Doing any tune by Roy Orbison is not a task for the faint-hearted, but Jimmy is more than equal to the task. Having Jools Holland in your band adds that boogie feel and touch, and you can feel and hear that on every track, Jools tickles the ivories, but leaves space for everyone else to join the party. Add to that the unmistakable sound of the Slap-Bass, courtesy of Thomas Lorioux, and it has a unique sound which dare I say, sounds like it was purposely made for this kind of music. Side 2 continues in much the same vane, until Land Of Hope And Glory, which has much more of a blues tinge than the rest of the album. You may recall Iggy Pop doing a version of Real Wild Child some years ago, well the version on here with Chris Cheney on vocals, is like Iggy on steroids and marching powder. Fast and ferocious high-energy rockabilly that almost leaves you breathless from just listening to it.
I sincerely hope that this is not just a one-off collaboration between these guys. I would love to hear at least one more album, this is too damn good to end here.

STEPHEN HARRISON

HILLSBOROUGH

COMIN'BACK FOR YOU

INDEPENDENT

Australia has considerable and enviable history in terms of outlaw culture, so it's not surprising that a

GET LOOSE
LET IT RISE

Independent

This happens to be another first for me, I mean that I've not come across this band before. Six guys who share all the songwriting duties, and that is not a common thing at all. You would normally expect one, maybe two, or three, but not all six members. So, what we have here is a slightly different type of band, and that always intrigues me. The first track, Just My Style, is a right outta-the-gate, in-your-face rocker. Lee Castle performs vocals and guitars on all tracks, and straight away his vocals resonate with me. The album twists and turns between rock, blues/rock, and dare I say it, a bit of prog/rock sprinkled around for good measure. What is pleasing about the album is that none of the genres mentioned overshadow one another, it's a great working balance between the musicians and the outcome of the songs. See You Moving sees Paul Asby take front and center on harmonica, adding to the great rhythm laid down by the rest of the band. It's such a groovy tune, full of good vibes, the harmonica being an integral part. As the album wore on, it became apparent that Get Loose is a band of friends as well as a band of musicians.

> *no ego, just everyone pitching in with great ideas*

This is evident in the writing of the songs - no ego, just everyone pitching in with great ideas. There are many artists and bands doing blues/rock albums, and I like that, but not everyone does it right, you have to connect, and be on the same page, this is what this album does, it joins all the dots, blues, rock, prog, and a little 70s style arena rock. Sunshines On The Righteous has it all, a melting pot of great musicians, great lyrics, and a swagger that will have you playing it over and over. Bravo guys.

STEPHEN HARRISON

mixture of vintage Americana and blues music should find its way out of that far off country. Hillsborough are a duo, singer and main writer Phil Usher, who bears a spooky physical resemblance to a young Johnny Cash, and Beata Maglai, and they have named their band after the area of Queensland that has been settled by Usher's family since the 1800's. Phil Usher may look like a vintage country legend, but his writing, and the blend of voices on this album, show that their style and vision is entirely their own. The album finds its feet on the second track ,Magnetic Lives, where the duo blend their voices over a vintage-sounding lilting echoey soundscape. Warning and regret are staples of blues music, of whatever strain, and that includes the country-based sound of Hillsborough. But they bring an interesting new take on the genre. The album title track highlights the appealing sound of Phil Usher's vocals. He simultaneously sounds entirely himself, while reminding you of lots of other singers you have enjoyed, but can't quite place. That's quite a skill. Adding the 50/60's rockabilly guitar sound in the solos increases the familiarity of the sound, but it still manages to sound fresh and inventive enough not to slip into cliches of sound. Exit Wounds takes

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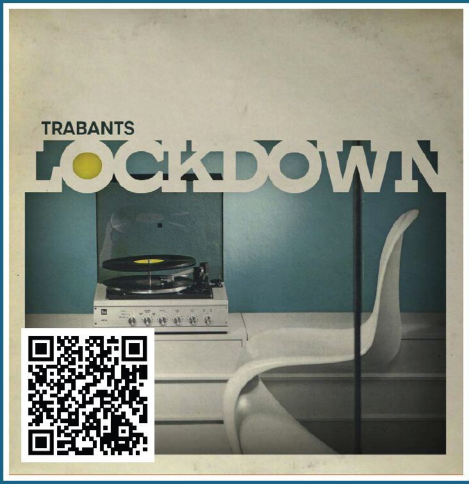

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JOHNNY MARS & THE COLD HEART REVUE
THE REUNION

Independent

The Cold Heart Revue is David Robinson, who back in the day took harmonica lessons from Johnny Mars in Portsmouth, England. Johnny is from South Carolina, so Portsmouth, England is not really a natural meeting point for two would-be blues enthusiasts. The album was in fact recorded in Portsmouth, so this must have been quite a fateful thing to happen. Anyway, onto the album, all the songs were written by David Robinson, and both he and Johnny share vocal duties. David played all the guitar parts, and Johnny played all the harmonica parts. The opener, The Man In The Red Hat shows you that you don't need fancy production or loads of other musicians to make a great blues album, you just need two like-minded individuals with a mutual love of blues. The songs are short and sweet, as soon as one ends, the next track is hot on its heels. The title-track, tells the life story of Johnny Mars, playing with Hendrix, Majic Sam, and a host of others, including Earl Hooker. The song tells the tale of when he was young right up until the present day, a sort of biographical song. There are no drums or percussion on the album, just electric/acoustic guitars, and twin harmonicas, and two distinctive vocals.

> *I wish more albums would be made like this*

The Role Of Love and Rose, back-to-back tracks are simply wonderful. It highlights the master and pupil, the intertwining of blues ideas, that seem to bounce off one another. These two guys know each other so well, it's reflected in every song. If you want a simple no-frills blues album, I urge you to get a copy of this. It's an album of great blues songs, great guitar, and great harmonica playing. No bells and whistles, just blues. I wish more albums would be made like this.

STEPHEN HARRISON

PHOTO: JESS BLAKE

NEW ALBUM OUT NOW

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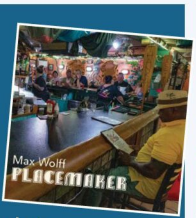
MAX WOLFF
PLACEMAKER



Independent

This is an acoustic album made up of eleven original songs, seven of them instrumental. There is a mix of blues, jazz, folk, and some country, but mainly it lies within the blues category. During the album, Max Wolff is joined by a plethora of musicians hailing from Denmark. The opening tune, Eight O' Clock Dream, is one of the seven instrumental tracks, you don't normally open an album with an instrumental, but surprisingly, it sets the tone for the rest of the album. Folk blues, country blues, call it what you will, but, You Don't Blow My Blues Away is a wonderful tune. Great lyrics, and such a lovely acoustic arrangement, that could so easily have come straight out of the Skip James book of the blues.

> *a lovely album full of acoustic tunes that put you in a better frame of mind*

That is what intrigues me so much about this album, the ability to drop in an instrumental whilst still retaining a blues mood. Blue Nights & Beige Days conveys the type of tune just by the title. Laid-back, at peace with the world. As well as easy-listening tunes that tip the hat to the blues and jazz, there are songs such as Eating Beef Late, that plunge you right back into the delta. Not exactly a blues title as such, but it is one hell of a blues tune. There has obviously been a lot of due care and attention going into the making of this album, Max knows when to leave space for the other musicians to join the foray, this is not as easy as it sounds, but he carries this off perfectly. Placemaker is a lovely album full of acoustic tunes that put you in a better frame of mind. A rocking chair on a porch surrounded by a white picket fence with an ice-cold beer. Get the picture, get the album, then you'll get the picture.

STEPHEN HARRISON

the pace down with a bed of Hammond organ, and When Nobody Knows Your Name continues the melancholy seam the band are mining, with a Cajun bar-band atmosphere. Outstanding song on this collection in Port Jackson Blues. Any of these songs would fit perfectly on the soundtrack of a thought-provoking American TV crime series, but this one is the 'end credits' choice. It's unlikely that Hillsborough will be making their way all the way over to the UK, but that shouldn't stop the UK blues community (and elsewhere of course!) encouraging them by buying this excellent album, and whatever follows it. This band is a find, make sure you don't lose them.

ANDY HUGHES

ANNA DAVIES AND THE SINNERMEN
SILVER LINING

INDEPENDENT

This four-track EP is very good, very good indeed. All of the songs were written by Anna Davies & Joe Lambert, not a bad one on the EP. The first tune is also the title track, Silver Lining. The thing that immediately strikes me is the vocals of Anna Rose, so bluesy and sultry with a hint of rasp. That goes for the other three songs, to be honest, the rest of the band all play their part in the making of this EP. Oh, My follows in much the same vane, as do the other tunes, Fool, and War Cry. On hearing this EP, I can't wait until this band releases an album full of songs like this, great blues with a feeling, because that's what this is all about. Blues with feeling. On top of that, I eagerly await live dates so that I can appreciate this band even more. I'm very confident that this is not the last we'll hear from Anna Davies & The Sinnermen.

STEPHEN HARRISON

MICHELLE MALONE
FANS FAVOURITES VOLUME 1

SBS RECORDS

The latest release from roots Americana singer songwriter and guitarist sees Michelle dipping into twelve acoustic laden tracks that bring together some of her best tunes in her thirty-year career as musician. These songs have become the mainstay of her live performances and show off her song writing prowess in an unplugged acoustic guitar led environment. This was recorded with guitarist Doug Kees and was a project born from the pandemic. Like other artists she did live streams, this increased her fan base and hence the release. Feather In A Hurricane sets the scene, snarling vocals set to amazing slide guitar, a real feel live tune, giving insight as to how good her live performances are, lyrics simply great, a bluesy number. Dimming Soul, shows Michelle's emotional vocal range quite beautiful. Love Yourself has a thrashy upbeat strutting feel, again superb lyrics a feelgood tune. On Super Ball her vocals are absolutely amazing, sensual, and evocative of a special place in time, spine tingling version. Weed And Wine seems to be her Bob Dylan homage, a great groove here. Avalon shows her finger picking style guitar notes and is a song about television news. Blue Suede opens with some superb guitar playing, a biographical song full of emotion. On the tune Debris, she sings and plays harmonica it is all in the lyrics here. Strength For Two is a beautiful ballad. Butter Biscuit shows her fun side, a countrified tune. Tighten Up The Strings changes the tempo lots of slide here frenetic pacy, wonderful. Last tune, When I Grow Up is a personal tune, very tongue in cheek, another fun tune. A wonderful compilation.

COLIN CAMPBELL

SISTER LUCILLE
TELL THE WORLD

BLUE HEART RECORDS

The profile of Sister Lucille, fronted by the superb Kimberley Dill, has been steadily on the ascendency since the 2019 debut Alive. I have no doubt that Tell The World will do just that, introducing the band to a global blues audience. Kimberley has one of those instantly recognisable voices and she is comfortable delivering high energy or soft and sensitive lyrics. The title track bursts out of the speakers, guitarist Jamie Holdren sprinkling wah- wah and sharp jabs throughout, rising the power levels. A brass section filling any spaces with aplomb. As good an opener as you'll find, a song full of exuberance and style. Everytime I Leave highlights the soft sultry side of Kimberley and Jamie's guitar reflects the remorseful mood perfectly. Jamie himself takes lead vocals on Breakin' My Heart, a song of lost love that gets great backing vocals by Kimberley and the brass section allowing space for some signature guitar bursts along the way. Why Not You is up next, a super Hill Country trancey blues written by Rebecca Russell who joins Kimberley on lead vocals. They certainly push each other to spine tingling heights. This should become an anthem for women worldwide, simply super stuff. My Name Is Lucille is a moving song inspired by the wonderful BB King and his love affair with Lucille, the worlds most famous black Gibson ES-330 guitar. Montezuma Red is a lyrically clever song celebrating strong women who won't accept poor excuses in love or anything else. Montezuma Red being a colour of lipstick introduced in 1941 matching the piping and chevrons on women's military uniforms. Kimberley delivers the message with appropriately powerful vocals, another stand out track. Devil In A Red Suit unleashes Jamie on vocals and guitar with rhythm section Kevin Lyons and Reed Smith Heron rock solid. Ready For The Times To Get Better is next, originally recorded by Crystal Gayle back in 1976. The band don't stray too far from the original, Kimberley's vocal delivery clear and

BISON HIP
OLDER, STRONGER, BETTER
Bad Monkey Records

Hailing from Glasgow, this five-piece band are relative newcomers to the blues/ rock scene, albeit, they have previously released two Eps before this album. They are not in the first flushes of youth, they have reached a level of maturity, shall we say. Anyway, on with the album. The opening tune, Nothing More, Nothing Less, for me is a kind of statement as to what we can expect from Bison Hip. It's a kind of, this is who we are, this is what we are about, it conveys a message of confidence, plus it's a hell of a great tune with which to open the album.

> ***it twists and turns with superb lyrics, vocals, and harmonies***

The thing that strikes me about this album is all the musicians and instruments are allowed space to grow, there is no such thing as, its all guitar, drums, and vocals. The keys and bass play a massive part in this album's makeup. The other major plus about this album is the songwriting, I find that the lyrics are so integral, they blend so well with the song, each song having its own interpretation of blues/rock. Symptomatic has more of a softer blues arrangement than some of the previous tunes, incorporating a beautiful guitar break in the middle of the song. This album has all the hallmarks of something quite special, it can't be pigeonholed into just one genre, it twists and turns with superb lyrics, vocals, and harmonies. The Old City is sort of self-explanatory, coming from Glasgow, Bison Hip regales us with a tale of the river, the humour, and the life of ordinary people that hail from this sometimes harsh and tough city. A beautiful, but honest lament of everyday life. As I attested to earlier, this is my first connection with this band, it has been a very memorable and joyous one. I really like this album a lot. I am already looking forward to their next release, whenever that may be.

STEPHEN HARRISON

emotive. My New Lovers is a saucy song about not being a one-man woman perhaps with a hidden message of missing one true love and alcohol playing its part. The album closes with Soulful Dress, an old Chess Records cut performed by Sugar Pie DeSanto about wearing sexy clothes and making a big impression. This is a wonderfully constructed album with a message about celebrating strong women running through it, a message emphasised by the production team of Reba Russell and Dawn Hopkins aka The Blue Eyed Bitches, and the design by Debra Clark Graphics. I'm sure it's no coincidence that Blue Heart Records, run by strong women, have released it. Get on board and revel in this super album.

STEVE YOURGLIVCH

JIM KIRKPATRICK
LIVE...ON THE RUN
INDEPENDENT

This album was recorded live at The Eleven Club in Stoke-On-Trent in May 2022. The gig contained new material from the upcoming new album, Dead Man Walking, and also songs from various stages of Jim's solo career, and his stint with Chris Bevington Organisation, as well as a few covers, were thrown in for good measure. The band consisted of Jim on vocals and guitar, Jem Davies, on keys, and harmonica, Leon Cave on drums, and last but not least, Ollie Collins on bass. Ballad Of A Prodigal Son, taken from the album of the same name opened proceedings, blasting over the audience like a whirling dervish. Hard and in-your-face blues/rock at its very best. I remember the gig as if it was only yesterday, but hearing the recorded version, reminded me just how good the sound system was on the day, the mix and PA working in tandem brilliantly. Changed Priorities and the blues anthem, 61 & 49, the latter written with Scott Ralph and featured during both of their stints with Chris Bevington. The first cover of the evening is nothing short of genius, While My Guitar Gently Weeps. I've heard a few versions of this classic, Eric Clapton did his own version, but I swear to god, I've not seen it done with this much feeling. It's not just the quality of the playing that makes this live album so good, it's the feeling that Jim and the whole band put into each and every song. Dead Man Walking, from the upcoming studio album, get's its first airing in public, and let me tell you, it certainly made a formidable impression on everyone. I can see it becoming an anthem whenever Jim plays it live. Always On The Road, a song written with Bernie Marsden, was initially intended for Joe Bonamassa, but for some reason, Joe declined his loss. The highlight of this very special gig for me was the god-like version of Five Long Years. It literally took everyone's breath away. This is as good as it gets, don't believe me? Buy this amazing live album, or better still, buy the album, then go see Jim Kirkpatrick live. You'll understand what I've been talking about. Blues gold.

STEPHEN HARRISON

NEW ALBUM OUT NOW

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MUDSLIDE CHARLEY
CLEARWATER JUNCTION
INDEPENDENT

Mudslide Charley are a local hero outfit who have been delivering their flavoursome brand of roots home cooking to the good people of Missoula, Montana, since 2004. Both the band and the hometown are new names to me, but if the gig listing on their website is anything to go by, they're in regular demand as a live act. Listen to this, their fifth album, and you can see why. There's nothing out of the ordinary in evidence, and extended soloing is eschewed for getting a groove on. But there's plenty of solid crowd-pleasing stuff, of a type sure to appeal to blues audiences everywhere. The set is made up 11 original songs, predominantly mid-tempo affairs built around classic chord progressions, and all penned by either lead and slide guitarist Marco Litig or harp merchant Phil Hamilton. Among the best cuts are the rock & roll inflected opening track Other Shoe, which gives vocalist Liza Ginning's a chance to shine while keyboardist Russ Parsons practices 1950s piano flourishes. Bootsy Basil is a funkier offering, while Lil' Miss Molasses is a foray into old school country. The blues standout is surely Long Death Ride, where Little Walter meets Elmore James knocking back a few bourbons in the last chance saloon. There's a nod to Tom Waits, too, in the shape of the spoken vocal and jazz sax on Don't Look Back. As a collection, Clearwater Junction won't be a revelation to blues buffs. But it's solidly entertaining and a lot of fun.

DAVID OSLER

TOM ADAMSON BAND
OLD VIEW OF THE NEW WORLD
INDEPENDENT

What a delightful and unexpected discovery. Tom Adamson is a Scottish multi-instrumentalist although when playing live he is often featured leading from the back on drums. This is his third album, sitting mainly in the melodic rock world but with tinges of jazz, Blues and Prog elements as well. It isn't the unholy mess that all that sounds, rather it is well written and performed and the fifteen tracks on offer here all have a degree of charm that really draws the listener into the music. The band consists of: Tom Adamson on

NEW ALBUM OUT NOW

DELTA BLUES OUTLAWS

L.A. EDWARDS

OUT OF THE DARKNESS

Bitchin' Music Group

After a two-year hiatus since their previous album, Blessings From Home, Out Of The Darkness is a song cycle study in the art of alternative country rock. Leading man Luke, along with his brothers Jesse Daniel and Jerry, Edwards has compiled a consistent collection of new tunes that finds Luke's voice flying freely over these ten tracks. The first half of this record was cut at Luke's Seattle home resulting in a down-home feel to the execution of all compositions. This evidence is found in the spooky organ driving Already Gone and the laid-back protest of Hi Rite Now! To begin, the opener Little Boy Blue with its upbeat vibe, smooth verse and chorus interchange sets this album's woozy tone.

> *a consistent collection of new tunes that finds Luke's voice flying freely*

This much is true for the atmosphere across the rest of these deeply mined dark emotional songs. Put together, they're reminiscent of the back-in-the-day Laurel Canyon country blues rock ambience. Ultimately, there's a subtle contrast of upbeat and downbeat songwriting here as exemplified by the clattering Let It Out and the shimmer and sway to Time To Go. Then there's the gloriously gloomy angst on Surrender and the introspective mood on Stick To You and Already Gone. The closing songs Peace Be With You and The Lucky One reveals an alluring light at the end of this reflective musical trip.

PAUL DAVIES

vocals, drums, guitars, keys and harmonica, supported by Jamie McCredie on lead electric guitar, Rob Paterson on bass, Konrad Wisniewski on sax (soprano, baritone & tenor) and Gareth Lockrane on piccolo and flutes. The album consists of 15 tracks, all very different and all with their own individual style but leaving no picture of Tom Adamson that you can put your finger on and say, "that is what he is about". I found myself dipping in and out at different times and different moods rather than listening to the album as a whole but the experience was never unsatisfactory. McCredie's guitar playing is excellent, classic rock style with some fine melodic touches and Gareth Lockrane's flute on The Black Dinner creates an ethereal and haunting atmosphere – very much a nighttime number. Elsewhere, the title track is a rocky number with touches of West Coast to it and a fine organ solo at the heart. Take Me is probably my favourite number, veering from style to style and from folk to country-rock with ease. A fine album with lots to enjoy and I shall definitely enjoy doing just that for a while to come.

ANDY SNIPPER

BIG SHOES

FRESH TRACKS

QUALIFIED RECORDS

Big Shoes are an Americana / Blues band of seriously top-level session players, who are channelling their deep love and influences from the artists they have worked with. That list is a veritable 'who's who of legendary artists including, but not limited to, Bonnie Raitt, The Allman Brothers, Van Morrison, Taj Mahal ... the list goes on. But the main influence on the writing and overall sound of the band, is the veritable leader of the pack in southern boogie blues music, Little Feat. It's reflected in the band's name, a homage to Little Feat, they are Big Shoes, see what they did there? Of course, with players like this, the peerless musicianship and execution of the material can almost be taken for granted. But the appeal of the band is rooted firmly in the front-and-centre command of vocalist Rick Huckaby. The late Lowell George left big shoes (sorry!) to fill with his tragically early passing, but in Huckaby, his vocal legend is in safe hands. Songs like If The Blues Was Green has a rollicking bar-room easy-on feel to it, with a gentle humour. Mark T Jordan provides peerless honky-tonk piano to lead the band through the rueful tale of a man who would be rich if the blues was transferred to hard currency. Roses Are Blue is as fine a piece of country blues as you could wish for. Rick Huckaby's voice provides all the emotion of a heartbreak, but it comes so effortlessly to him, that there is an underlying feeling of optimism in this sad tale. It needs a rocker to lighten the mood, and a couple of songs further on is I've Seen The Light, and the title says it all. A man who realises that his relationship is not what it should be, and he's realised, before its too late. The band of course, are happy to provide a relentlessly cheerful boogie backing to see the song home. This is the cream of the cop, and listening to this album, it's really easy to see why.

ANDY HUGHES

NAT MYERS

YELLOW PERIL

EASY EYE SOUND

Traditional blues with a twenty first century twist, Nat Myers may be a new name in the blues genre to some but not for long if this stunning debut release is anything to go by. Nat's musical background includes Hip Hop and hard-core sounds, but he channels his music from such luminaries as Charlie Patton and Mississippi Fred McDowell on these ten tracks full of passion and feeling for the genre. A Korean American blues griot raised in North Kentucky, he sings with a joyous swagger and drawl and his fingerpicking guitar work is clever and quick with full rhythm. Dan Auerbach produced this release with Pat McLaughlin featuring as well. 75-71 sets the scene based on the old train songs and has a deeper meaning in the lyrics, about escaping and anguish to a steady acoustic beat. Trixin' has a ragtime feel raw and pacy, his vocals hearken to the blues pioneers, an upbeat tune steady rolling blues. Yellow Peril the title track brings us to present day post pandemic issues and injustices therein, very evocative just listen to the lyrics, a warning chorus with double meaning, well have the best blues songs not had these intonations, stunning tune. Ramble No More is also a highlight, some raw Delta blues here, superb rhythm a stomping tune. Duck N' Dodge continues the tempo with some amazing guitar craftsmanship. Roscoe; brings in some Hill country blues, bare bone emotions flood through. Last tune is Pray For Rain a country blues tune, some great harmonies with a catchy chorus. Excellent release, highly recommended.

COLIN CAMPBELL

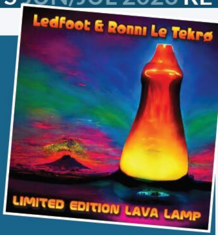
BIG HARP GEORGE

CUT MY SPIRIT LOOSE

BLUES MOUNTAIN RECORDS

LEDFOOT AND RONNI LE TEKRO

LIMITED EDITION LAVA LAMP



TBC Records

Gatefold sleeve with lyrics and orange vinyl, seventies vibe at first glance and through this latest release. This is the second collaboration from American bluesman Ledfoot and Norwegian consummate guitarist Ronnie Le Tekro.Produced by HP Gundersen who also plays guitar here, at Nyhagen this incorporates all things blues but with tinges of Americana and quite excellent song writing and musicianship.

> *wonderful release, a sure fire winner!*

Rhythm section is, Anders Odden on bass guitar and drummer Trond Augland, accompanied by Markus O Klyve on keyboards. A fusion of heavy electric guitar sonics intertwined with heavenly vocal deliveries, nine well-crafted tunes, rocky melancholic blues tones abound on this wonderful release, sure fire winner, appealing to any music lover. Little Rosie opens the release with a countrified upbeat catchy tune. Crying, is a hauntingly beautiful tune resonating sonics and slow laid-back vibes. The Ego In The Coffin rocks the blues, a foot stomping guitar driven tune, great guitar riff solid groove. How Hard It Is, slows the tempo and takes the listener on a journey with its pleading lyrics. Never Use Your Eyes is a mellow tune with a stunning arrangement, great chorus. Sailor has the feel of a bluesy sea shanty, the melody is just infectious. Limited Edition Lava Lamp is sonically interesting, and the soundscape has all types of music involved and peppered with anthemic lyrics. The reinterpretation of Quincy Jones's, Sister is a raw stripped back version again haunting vocals and great arrangement. Last tune, This Hurtful Game has tinges of late Johnny Cash vocals mixed to an ethereal tone.

COLIN CAMPBELL

Leading from the front, George Bisharet lends his spirited vocals and lively chromatic harmonica to this album of 12 originals and a cover of the Beatles. With a brass heavy soundscape, funk blues guitars, from Kid Anderson, bass, keyboards and drums, and some excellent harmony vocals, the album brings to mind Atlantic Soul music as much as it does the blues. The Hammond organ and harmonica solos of She's A Woman adds a sophisticated sheen to one of The Beatles songs, with the play-out being particularly impressive. The songs on the album take a look at various pressing matters, from the Covid reminder of It's Tuesday, to Rantytown which takes conspiracy theorists to task. On My Dog is Better than You the bass part of Beyond the Sea or My Baby Just Cares for Me is given a bluesy twist, with the dog in question, Lulu adding her own barked contribution. This is a fun, party album that also requires some extra listening to get the full meaning of each of the songs. There are two instrumentals, with Jump Abu Lula! and Sunrise Stroll bringing the up-beat party atmosphere, and plenty of musical prowess to the table. None of the tracks outstay their welcome, packing plenty of spirit and fun into the mix. Although there is nothing here in particular for the blues purist,

ROBERT JON & THE WRECK

LIVE AT THE ANCIENNE BELGIQUE

Journeyman Records

Robert Jon & The Wreck's musical journey, especially in Europe, is smoothly drifting from middle lane madness to a riotous life in the fast lane. Playing larger venues on return trips to these shores is a sure sign as is the growing record sales. Plus, the received kudos for their studio output, such as recent EP One Of A Kind, has buffed up their burgeoning reputation. In the age-old tradition of bands needing a bit of breathing space between studio releases, this live album, recorded in Brussels in June 2022, documents RJ&TW musical achievements seven years into their tuneful adventure. Plus, being released on Joe Bonamassa's record label, it's certainly a case of so far, so good as Live at The Ancienne Belgique proves.

> *The Wreck are the real deal!*

The musical modus operandi from the cautionary tale of The Devil Is Your Only Friend, with its intertwining of slide and lead guitar and keyboards, light and shade musical mood colours, and the Allman Brothers influenced duelling guitars on Do You Remember, is one of good time blues hued Southern Roots Rock. As those who have seen the band live will attest, lead guitarist Henry James Schneekluth is a guitar genius of this genre who fuels this band's rocket of songs with his fiery fretwork par excellence. His guitar solo, three songs in, says it all as he slides into the boogie riff to Hey Mama. Not to be overlooked, Robert Jon Burrison's mid to high register vocals communicate these tunes straight out of the dogeared Southern Rock boogie book of how to do it right. Overall, as good as the musicianship is, this bulging genre of bands would be nothing without good songs and The Wreck has very good songs. Blame It On The Whiskey, Oh, Miss Carolina, Tired Of Drinking Alone and, especially, Shine A Light On Me Brother sound as excellent live as they do on record. California's finest, Robert Jon & The Wreck are the real deal!

PAUL DAVIES

there is plenty for the more casual genre listener to like. If nothing else, it will make at least some of your toes tap.

BEN MACNAIR

PETER STORM & THE BLUES SOCIETY

SECOND

INDEPENDENT

This band represented Portugal in the European Blues Awards 2022. This is their second release mostly original tracks other than Feel Like Breaking Up Somebody's Home Tonight, which gets a funky arrangement here. They are a tight four-piece band with lead guitarist and vocalist Joao Belchior the front person. Rhythm section is, Jose Reis on bass and drummer Jorge Oliveira and guitarist. Fourth musician is guitarist and harmonica player Bino Ribeiro. Different shades of blues shine through these songs, they know how to ply their craft and get that feeling. Starting with the pacy up-tempo Write Down The Blues, this band is serious a great shuffle to this full-on harmonica tones. Blame is a slow tempo song that accentuates the lead vocals to a smooth bluesy backbeat. Go Down And Play brings old time rhythm and blues to the fore. A toe tapper. Meditation Blues is a stunning slow blues number evoking smoky Blues Clubs, laid back tune, crisp and clear notes a treat. 52nd Avenue is another shuffling tune that resonates well with each note, the narrator tells the tale of memories of this street, a jump jive type tune, lots of harmonica and the rhythm is great. Black Hole is a sleazy blues rock number. Beatrice chugs along well, some horns to this one helps the flow of the song. I Told You is another tone change, slow blues with meaning. Final tune, Show Me Your Love is an upbeat catchy number full of bass driven infusion. Blues with some spice, yes please.

COLIN CAMPBELL

CHARLOTTA KERBS & THE STRAYS

MUSCLE SHOALS SESSIONS

RAMASOUND

Charlotte Kerbs & The Strays is a band co-founded by Finnish singer, songwriter, and producer Charlotta Kerbs and American producer, bassist and songwriter Darrell Craig Harris. Originally founded as an online collaboration, these two musicians coming from different backgrounds and continents found a common base in the love for music. Recorded at the Fame recording studios, Muscle Shoals Sessions is a six track EP of original songs, one co-written and five by Charlotta. Joining Charlotta (vocals) and Darrell (bass) are Will McCartney (guitars), Peter Levin (Hammond, Rhodes), Justin Holder (drums), Cindy Walker and Marie Tomlinson Lewey (backing vocals) with Brad Guin (saxophones) and Caleb Elliott (cello). The EP kicks off with the co-written Every Step I Take; a steady rhythm is overlaid with some nice swirling keys and a sterling saxophone solo. The expressive emotional vocals are interspersed with harmonised backing vocals and gentle saxophone and guitar breaks on this pleasing soulful number. The drums and bass keep a solid uptempo rhythm going on Come What May, with understated guitar breaks and more fine vocals and harmonies together with the keys and percussion giving this a slight gospel feel. Janis is a splendid ballad which oozes stylish soul, poignant vocals and stirring saxophone makes this my highlight. Changing pace with the emotionally charged Eagle, featuring gently finger picked guitar and haunting cello giving a beautiful backdrop for Charlotta's emotive vocals, reminiscent of Joni Mitchell. The final track is Glorious, a stripped-down a cappella gospel song. Charlotta delivers a passionate intense vocal rendition with the angelic backing vocals taking it to another level, a great finish to the record, if you like Soul/ Gospel this will be right up your street, very enjoyable

SHIRL

SKYLAR ROGERS

AMONG THE INSANITY

BLUE HEART RECORDS

With writing partner Roger Wilson, also the guy that brought in an A-list of studio players and used his highly sought after skills as a producer on this album, this lady has realised a 12 track CD where each song tells its own personal story and together, they do a cracking job. Each song has its own melody, rhythm and story with the same two constants that Skylar brings, the amazing voice and wonderful, crystal clear, storytelling. I often like music when I can't make out all the lyrics, but I could follow the story through each word that Skylar was singing so, just above the music. As soon as the first track, Love In The Left Lane starts, my mind immediately conjures up two fierce and incredibly talented ladies, Tina Turner and Grace Jones. Skylar has a low tone in her voice that is deep and always present, reminiscent of Tina and the compelling story telling skill that Grace possesses. but the ladies all her own. This album of 12 tracks is a lovely mix of personnel stories to a backdrop of great musicianship and takes Skylar into a more Blues/ Rock direction. I believe she enjoyed the new direction and the collaboration with Roger pushed her and she delivered. Overcoming several personal challenges during the pandemic did what life can do for some artists and that's to provide them with a wealth of feeling that their gift can turn into stories that resonate with most. I am not a great listener of music in my car, it's my quiet space however, Skylar and Among the Sanity has accompanied me most mornings for some weeks now and its lovely to have her with me. If she comes to the UK, I will be buying a ticket to see her, and you should buy this album.

JEAN KNAPPITT

JZ JAMES

LET COME LET GO

HEY! BLAU RECORDS

There are some albums that echo the past, that wear their influences like a coat, and Let Come Let Go is one of those albums. Safely in the genre of folk-rock and Americana, the influence of Van Morrison, The Band and early Dylan are all evident, indeed track two Take Me Out is a very close brother to The Weight by The Band, it even includes the same piano parts, chord progression and vocal abandonment. Back in Line is a spirited, violin-soaked bluesy romp, and A Place For You and Me is a mandolin led slow rocker. The whole of the album was recorded very quickly, with songs and arrangements put together in the studio, and that sense of sonic adventure is evident throughout, with the vocals of JZ James showing the rhythms of Dylan, but much of the soul of Van Morrison. The songs are all attractively written and recorded, with harmonica, mandolin and the trumpet of Paul Swing adding much to the mix. The slow movement that opens Healing Ground soon gives way to an Appalachian bluegrass rhythm, but it shows another facet to these talented musicians. Black Old Beast is a slow country drawl with slide guitar and double bass adding tonal colour and variations. Childhood

ABI MOORE

NO MORE CHASING

Independent

I hate to say this, but this is my first musical encounter with Abi Moore. So I come to the album without any preconceptions, which is something that I do find a very enjoyable experience. The album opens with, Livin' Underground which has an acapella start with handclaps in the background, before the guitar kicks in. It's not the usual thing to do when opening an album, you would be forgiven for expecting an in-your-face approach, but this album is full of wonderful surprises. The songs switch between rock, soft ballads, and blues/rock with a hint of American thrown in for good measure. Now that may not come as any sort of surprise, but it's how the songs are presented that makes them so good. This album is very much a vocal album, by that I mean that the vocals and lyrics are at the heart of everything, the music takes a secondary role, it's there in the background, but it's the vocals that grab your ear. Apologies And Promises is a perfect example, a sweet soft tune with beautiful piano accompaniment, almost the type of tune that you would associate Carole King with. The mood shifts once again with the magnificent Lost And Found which brings some blues into the mix. The addition of a harmonica makes this song, great lyrics, and great vocals, with a nod and a wink to the blues. This album has appealed to me in so many ways, the fact that it's impossible to pigeonhole the album, or Abi Moore makes it even more enjoyable.

STEPHEN HARRISON

Days is a violin drenched narrative song, with plenty of memory invoking images, and the last track Ice Cold Water is perhaps the most atmospheric pieces, with slide guitar, keyboards and bass, and a slow rhythm behind the story that JZ James tells. The album is an appealing one, with careworn vocals, and much musical interest, with none of the tracks outstaying their welcome. If you are one of those Americana fans who liked the bands of the late 1960's and early 1970s, Let Come, Let Go is an album to welcome into your collection.

BEN MACNAIR

DANA GILLESPIE

73: LIVE AT THE TAM

TEMPLE OF ART AND MUSIC

This album is almost ironic, it was recorded on the 73rd birthday of Dana Gillespie, it is the 73rd album of her career, and today I'm listening to it on the occasion of her 74th birthday. This album was recorded live at The Temple Of Art And Music in London before a very appreciative audience. What Live At The Tam is all about is giving us a unique insight into one of the longest careers in blues music, six decades to be precise. Dana Gillespie has trodden the blues path extensively during her career, but not all the songs on this live album are blues tunes, for example, Andy Warhol, written for her by her close friend, David Bowie, with Bowie providing backing vocals and Mick Ronson providing a beautiful guitar accompaniment. Dana performed this special gig with her magnificent backing band, The London Blues Band, believe me, they are magnificent. Disc 1 opens with, Old School, which for me, kind of sums up Dana exactly. An old-school blues artist, writer, and, performer, with a wonderful on-stage presence, and a glint in her eye. The glint in her eye stems from having a naughty but nice sense of humour, a great understanding, and a manipulation of innuendo that is unmistakable. Big Boy Boogie, was recorded and written with Joachim Paiden, who hails from Vienna. The song does not need any explanation, it does what it says on the tin. However, My Girls Pussy, a song written in 1931, is very tongue-in-cheek, a sort of, ooh matron feel, tremendous fun, but such a great tune with guitarist Marcus-Praestgaard-Stevens hitting the right spot, if you know what I mean!! Twenty Four Seven, and Where Blue Begins capture the atmosphere of this intimate gig, and the intimacy of what Dana is all about. A truly great rendition of Feeling Good, originally a musical score for The Smell Of The Crowd, then immortalized by Nina Simone in 1965. The rendition on this live album certainly lives up to that of its predecessor. Blue Temptation, was recorded in a studio with her dear friend, Marc Almond who accompanies Dana so eloquently. A fitting end to an album that tells the life story of the queen of the British Blues scene, Dana Gillespie.

STEPHEN HARRISON

MIKE PINI AND AUDIO54

WAY AHEAD

HOUSE OF HAPPINESS

I first came across Guitarist and Vocalist Mike Pini in the late 1980's when I purchased his debut LP "Wildman" produced by Mike Vernon on the re-established Blue Horizon label, which is an excellent Blues album that had the benefit of including both Chris Youlden and Paul Jones on guest vocals. Mick is a stalwart from the late 1960's British Blues Boom but has for may years resided in Germany where he has sporadically released albums over the past couple of decades. This album brings him to the forefront of 21st Century Blues music with the use of digital recording technology, interspersed with Mick's stinging Guitar and haunting vocals, providing the listener with a complete blues experience. The technology is created by UK producer Craig Marshall who goes under the moniker of Audio54, this has really opened my ears to what benefits technology can bring to traditional Blues music. The track Moving On is a great example of how the technology best works, Craig creates an atmospheric background while Mick lays down some chunky one chord guitar rhythm alongside some Harp and a vocal that is reminiscent of Beefheart. Another standout track is Papa Voodoo which as the name implies is full of New Orleans mystery and has a thumping back beat with a heavy Conga presence. There are some underlying Jazz and Funk foundations to the music, which have been expertly shaped by Craig, but the heart of the music is Blues. At times the raw guitar sounds are reminiscent of the likes of Albert Collins. This album represents a different take on the Blues, utilising an excellent experienced Blues musician at the core and then adding the surround sounds with some skilful technology, a winner all round.

ADRIAN BLAKLEE

DENIS AGENET & THE NOLAPSTERS

PEACE OF LAND

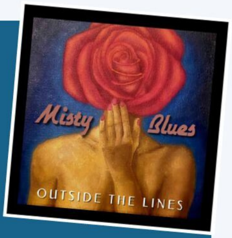
ROCKNHALL RECORDS

Denis Agenet will be a new name to most UK and US blues fans. But for many years, Agenet has been the backbone and backbeat/backline of countless touring US bluesmen in France. A drummer who almost literally throws himself into performances, he is often found partnered by leading French upright-bass player Abdel Be Bop – always a winning combination for any touring artist. Now, he has embarked on a brave journey, putting together a full-throttle, in-your-face 12-piece band that truly grabs the spirit and essence of classic US soul and blues, gives it a shake by the scruff and delivers a wonderful debut album. (It's worth noting that the album features almost twenty musicians and includes US picker, Nathan James, and a few French blues stalwarts like Nico Wayne Toussaint and Arnaud Fradin in the mix. Make no mistake, this is an absolutely excellent release, rich in traditional NOLA horns, that Memphis-cum-Stax sound totally assured and as demanding as ever. The material is self-penned and self-assured. In short there is no way of just sitting still throughout this many-faceted and perfectly paced album. This is good ol' music guaranteed to get you on your dancing feet. I have the pleasure to personally know and admire Agenet, having seen him countless times live in Europe. Last year, he debuted this fabulous band at France's premier blues event, Cognac Blues Passions Festival, to widespread acclaim. The success of that very debut gig has resulted in a rebooking for the 2023 Festival and Agenet & The Nolapsters look to be on a trajectory to glory. This is one of those albums that lift the spirit and should be a must-have purchase for all lovers of full-on blues and soul music with attitude.

IAIN PATIENCE

MISTY BLUES BAND

OUTSIDE THE LINES



Guitar One Records

This is the twelfth release from this unique band who bring, blues, gospel, rhythm and blues and funk peppered with just an entertaining upbeat vibe. Eleven tracks, something for any music lover, lead singer and guitarist Gina Coleman epitomises her feel for the lyrics and tunes, a stalwart. Starting with the amazing Where Your Blues Come From this is a powerhouse of a tune, a response to criticism about another powerful song here called The Hate, featuring Kat Riggins also on vocals and some wonderful slide guitar from Justin Johnson. These songs encapsulate the band as a solid unit of wonderful musicians with a distinctive sound. Been A Long Time Coming is another highlight, featuring Eric Gales on guitar, full on funky soul groove here. Seth Fleischmann puts a great guitar riff on Judgement Day with horn section building this up to a gospel infused tune, upbeat vibes here, Benny Kohn gets special mention on keyboards.

a full band sound, everyone getting a spotlight to share

Dare To Dream was co-written with bass player and Gina's son Diego Mongue a song about testifying, haunting vocals mix with soaring saxophone notes from Aaron Dean, mesmerising jazzy tinged song. Days Of Voodoo And Laughter is straight blues, no frills, and a stunning laid-back vibe, capturing the essence of the flow of this release. I Don't Sleep features the velvet vocals of Petri Byrd an autobiographical tune. Every Which Way is a song of defiance set to a funky backbeat and call and response formula, a full band sound, everyone getting a spotlight to share.

COLIN CAMPBELL

IBBA TOP 40

INDEPENDENT BLUES BROADCASTERS ASSOCIATION

www.bluesbroadcasters.co.uk

POSITION	ARTIST	ALBUM
1	THE BLUESBONES	UNCHAINED
2	ERIC BIBB	RIDIN'
3	THE CURSE OF K.K. HAMMOND	DEATH ROLL BLUES
4	BISON HIP	OLDER STRONGER BETTER
5	ELLES BAILEY	SHINING IN THE HALF LIGHT
6	THE ROADHOUSE BLUES BAND	LONG TIME COMING
7	THE CASH BOX KINGS	OSCAR'S MOTEL
8	BIG WOLF BAND	LIVE & HOWLIN'
9	ANA POPOVIC	POWER
10	BOB CORRITORE & FRIENDS	WOMEN IN BLUES SHOWCASE
11	DEAN ZUCCHERO	ELECTRIC CHURCH FOR THE SPIRITUALLY MISGUIDED
12	ANDREW RIVERSTONE	PUSHING AGAINST THE FLOW
13	DOUG MACLEOD	RAW BLUES 1
14	PETER STORM & THE BLUES SOCIETY	SECOND
15	THE TERRAPLANES BLUES BAND	STEPPING STONES
16	HARD STAIRS	BIGGER BLUES
17	BUDDY GUY	THE BLUES DON'T LIE
18	BIG HARP GEORGE	CUT MY SPIRIT LOOSE
19	THE COMMONERS	FIND A BETTER WAY
20	DEUCE 'N A QUARTER	KEEP MOVING ON
21	DOM MARTIN	A SAVAGE LIFE
22	BRIAN RAWSON BAND	BRIAN RAWSON BAND - EP
23	JIM KIRKPATRICK	DEAD MAN WALKING
24	JENNIFER LYN & THE GROOVE REVIVAL	GYPSY SOUL
25	PAUL COWLEY	STROLL OUT WEST
26	MIKE ROSS	THIRD EYE OPEN
27	KEITH THOMPSON	TIMELESS VOL 2
28	WHEN RIVERS MEET	ACES ARE HIGH
29	DEB CALLAHAN	BACKBONE
30	MIKE ZITO & ALBERT CASTIGLIA	BLOOD BROTHERS
31	BRUCE KATZ BAND	CONNECTIONS
32	MICHAEL JEROME BROWNE	GETTIN' TOGETHER
33	KOKO TAYLOR	I GOT WHAT IT TAKES
34	ANGELIQUE FRANCIS	LONG RIVER
35	ROBERT JON & THE WRECK	ONE OF A KIND EP
36	GOV'T MULE	PEACE...LIKE A RIVER
37	DOUGLAS AVERY	TAKE MY RIDER
38	BACKTRACK BLUES BAND	A DAY BY THE BAY
39	GUY TORTORA	ANYWHERE BUT HERE
40	BOO BOO DAVIS	BOO BOO BOOGALOO

IBBA

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PICKS OF THE MONTH
APRIL 2023

PETE REA

ZERO HOUR

MIKE ROSS

THIRD EYE OPEN

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NEW ALBUM

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